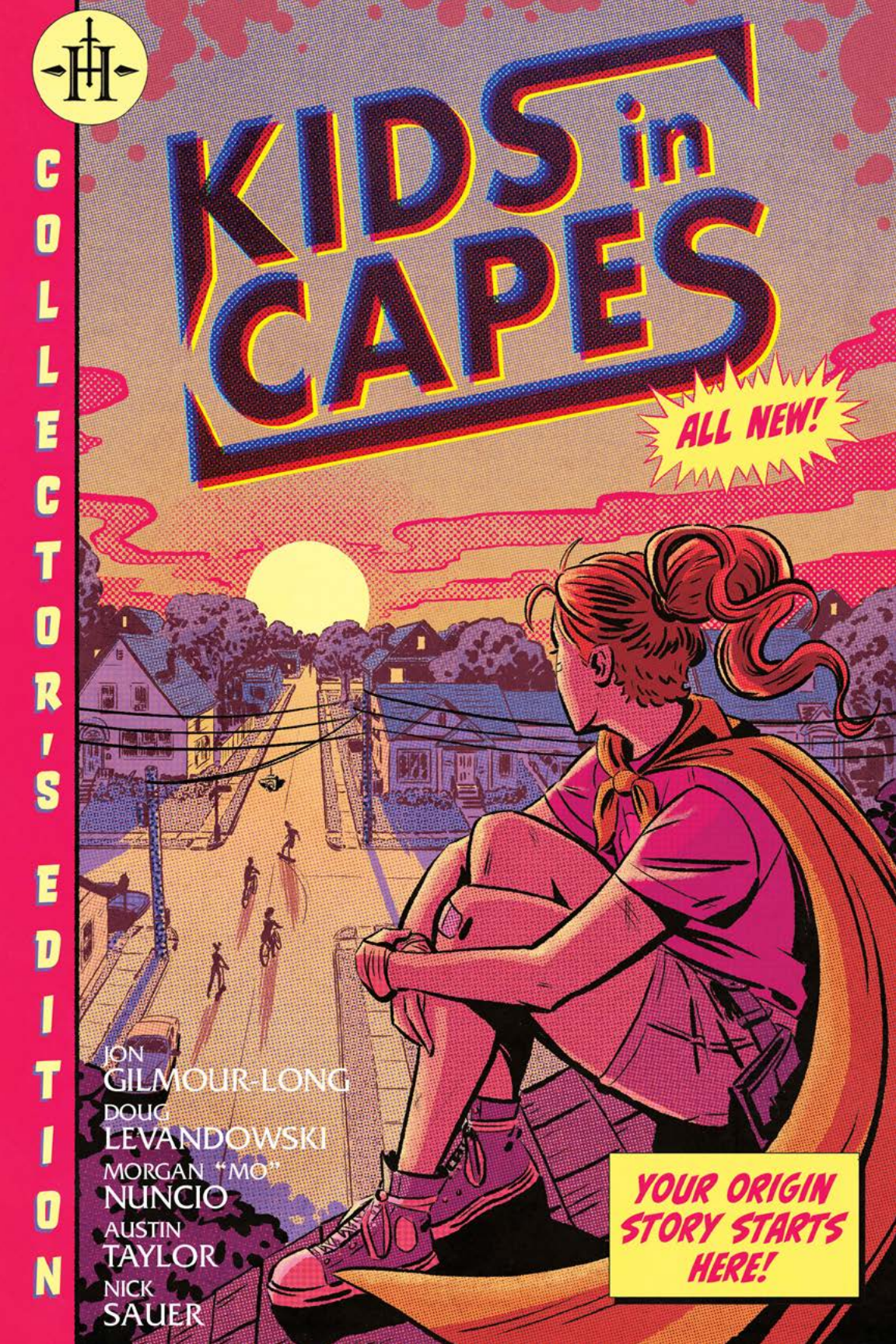
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KIDS in CAPES
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JON GILMOUR-LONG
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MORGAN "MO" NUNCIO
AUSTIN TAYLOR
NICK SAUER
YOUR ORIGIN STORY STARTS HERE!

# KIDS IN CAPES

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HUNTERS
ENTERTAINMENT

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# INTRODUCTION

Lamar Jenkins sits in Mrs. Kanvaugh's homeroom class. The minutes feel like hours as they stare out the window, daydreaming of the weekend ahead: Homecoming. This year they finally have a date, with Raven Wilson no less. Yeah, this is their year for sure—no more middle school teasing. Sure, they were being mostly ignored, but if they showed up to homecoming with *the* Raven Wilson, that would surely change soon. This homecoming is going to change everything!

Megan Ahmed is in study hall helping her friends with their AP Calc assignment. She's always loved to read and loves her friends, so it just makes sense. Megan's parents think she works too hard tutoring, but parents don't know anything. If she doesn't help them all pass, then they won't get into the same college in a few years, and she just cannot have that. Besides, it *is* homecoming weekend, so the faster they all finish with the assignment, the faster they can all have some fun. It is their second-to-last homecoming together, and it's going to be one to remember.

Bryan Smith sits in detention, again, for trying to break into the principal's office, again. He knows they will have to let him out soon because it's homecoming weekend, and there is no way the team wins without him on the field—so he is just running out the clock like his coach taught him to do on the field. Everyone keeps talking about his future and what to do after high school, but he is a senior on a football scholarship heading to the top school in the state. What does he have to worry about? Homecoming is his time. No one can touch him then.

Three hours later, the announcer for the big game yells into the stadium audio system, "Let's see some football!"— just as every single light in the stadium goes dark. Through the darkness, students can hear the chittering of chiton and laughter of the vile villainous Maximus Rex, a man determined to bring about a new world order, led by himself and his army of bug soldiers. The crowd breaks out into a panic until three beams of light shine on the field and cheering commences: the town's newest superhero group, Champions of Hope, stand ready to face down the threat. Bryan, aka Lighting Bolt, fires a jolt of electricity at a power box to get the lights back on. Megan, aka Yellowjacket, activates her emergency nanobots stored in her locker that spring to action to repair the damage done to the stands from Rex's entry. Finally, Lamar, aka Mx. X, fires out a brain blast more powerful than they ever have before to bring Rex out of the sky.

These three unlikely friends, who've become unlikely heroes, are about to embark on the culmination of their journey that has taken them down paths they never thought possible. Each one of them was right: this *will* be an unforgettable homecoming. Their origin story is about to reach its conclusion, but yours is just getting started. In *Kids in Capes*, what stories

will you make with friends, what cities will you save, and will you get to take Raven Wilson to homecoming or not? These are questions only you can answer. Your origin story starts here.

## SAFETY

Before starting any adventure at the table, safety is a must. Safety comes before fun because you cannot have fun if the game hits on subjects that make anyone uncomfortable. Establishing tone, setting boundaries, and recognizing the type of play everyone at the table wants to invest in is the very first conversation that needs to take place at the table. Superheroes face a wide range of challenges and have to make sacrifices, which may be something your characters have never faced before.

Without any of this in place, there may be some scenarios or things that may unintentionally hurt or distress fellow players, which in turn makes them lose trust in the group. Being open, thoughtful, and listening during this process will help lead you to have fantastic discussions about what works with everyone there. Although *characters* may face unexpected, unpleasant situations, *players* should always be happy with what's happening in the game.

Before you build your world and your characters, spend time discussing safety with your table. Below is just one of the few approaches out there, so if you have something that works for your table, go for it! But make sure that you're taking everyone's fun seriously.

Use the **Safety List** (which can be found in **Appendix A - Safety List** on page 129) with your fellow players (GM included), so you can all talk about what you want, and don't want in the game.

To use a **Safety List**, players (GM included) will make note of topics and elements that they don't want to have in their game. Because open communication is vital at a table, players will work together to fill this out. The GM will also fill this out alongside the players, as their safety and comfort is  just as important as the players.

- A **Line** is a topic or element of play that does not get brought up in game at all. There is no reference to this topic at all in the history of the story, and characters cannot have this in their backstory. This is a line that cannot be crossed for any reason. For example, players might decide that they don't want drug use to be referenced in the game at all. If so, no references to it will ever happen, either directly or indirectly.
- A **Veil** is a topic or element of play that can be brought up in game, but not directly in the story being told. It can be a part of the history of the world or of a character's backstory, but it can never be brought up in direct play. This is veiled from the story, so it may still be seen in the distance but never up close. For example, players might decide to veil animal abuse. This means that they won't ever roleplay scenes involving animal abuse, but a villain might have a history of running a dogfighting ring.
- An **Ask First** is a topic or element of play that can be brought up in game only after a quick conversation with the table. It is up to the table then to see how they are feeling at the time. Only everyone at the table's enthusiastic consent on the topic allows it into play. Otherwise, the table will move in another direction. For example, a player might want the table to check before any vivid descriptions of physical injuries. In some sessions, it might be fine, but other times,

it might ruin their game, so the rest of the table will always take care and check before describing injuries.

- A **Not For Me** is listed for players to write down things that they will allow in game, but they do not want this topic or element to directly be pointed at them. Having them note which player this is for helps the GM and other players be mindful of not directing this at a subject. For example, if a player doesn't want their character to be flirted with, they might set this as a Not For Me even if they have no issues with other characters flirting and being flirted with.
- A **Wish** is a topic or element of play that is something players (GM included) want to see in play. This helps guide play to involve certain things. It can be a scene or an element of play. For example, a player might want to have the prom play a big role in the narrative, and another player might want to include scenes where their character says the wrong thing at the wrong time.

> ***PLEASE NOTE:*** ALL TOPICS THAT HAVE MULTIPLE CHECKS WILL DEFAULT TO THE HIGHEST BOUNDARY. IF THERE IS AN ITEM THAT IS SELECTED AS A VEIL AND LINE, THE TOPIC WILL AUTOMATICALLY BECOME A LINE.

This **Safety List** is a living document and will be reviewed by everyone at the table before each session. It can also be changed or added to. Perhaps there was a topic or element of play that was missed before, or that an item that is a "Veil" would be more comfortable as a "Line." Please discuss any possible changes together before the session starts so that everyone is aware and honest conversations are had. No explanation is needed for the changes; it is just an awareness that they were corrected.

During your games, this list will always be accessible and visible to everyone at the table. In this way, everyone can keep safety at the front of their mind. This document is editable by everyone around the table, if changes are needed. **"Beacons"** on page 7 will address how and when to change the list.

## TREATMENT OF MARGINALIZED GROUPS AND HISTORICAL ACCURACY

Comic books and tabletop roleplaying games both follow similar paths in their origin: hobbies usually designed by white, cis-gendered and heterosexual (cishet), able-bodied men with generally white, cishet, able-bodied narratives to a predominantly similar audience. It's fascinating to keep in mind as we dive into this section, recognizing the intersection of the historical accuracy of comics and marginalized groups of the same era.

When you play a tabletop roleplaying game based on comic books and superheroes, reviewing this similar overlap critically and with the enjoyment of your players in mind allows you to understand the nuance and growth of both comics and games.

While going through worldbuilding, one of the first questions to ask is, "When does the campaign take place?" Looking through the **Age of Comics** pullout on page 12 and speaking with your players, the group decides in roughly which time frame the game will occur. The questions the group will need to ask themselves is how historically accurate do they want to be in the game: for example, do they want to be part of a Golden Age game or a Bronze Age one? Keeping the **Safety List** in mind will guide your answers and fleshing out the timeline your table is playing in.

Again, the main priority for the table is to have fun, but that can't happen without everyone feeling safe. If you allow certain topics of exclusion (including but not limited to racism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, and sexism.) in your game, discuss with the players how they would look. If playing in the Golden Age, will it fit the historical accuracy of the 1940s? Or, will it be a looser definition of the time, where it aesthetically reflects the time, but society's views and reflections are more in line with contemporary values? Discuss with the table what this alternative timeline looks like and how it changes things to our own modern perspective. Are you playing in the 1980s, but without the Reagan administration or the HIV/AIDS epidemic? Or are you all going to play in the 1940s without World War II happening, which means that fascism in Europe and the Holocaust never existed?

The way you as a group choose to play the game is the right way the game shall be played; however, if you do publicly share your game – like in a podcast or an actual play livestream – the impact of your choices and designs matter more than the intent of your world building, full stop. Recognizing that the consent of the audience as another player at the table has to be weighed in. Giving content warnings at the beginning of your aired session or as show notes will help the audience decide if this is for them.

A hard-line for *Kids in Capes* is that marginalized identities are never a joke and shall never be treated as one. They shall also never be caricatured, exotified, pitied, or used as a villain's motive. Care for your table, follow the Safety List and any lines or veils placed, and design a world that everyone at the table will love!

## Including Disabled Characters or Neurodiverse Characters

For some players, a traditionally able-bodied or neurotypical character might not fit their vision. A player may want to embody a character who's physically disabled or whose brain

IS NEURODIVERGENT. AS WITH ANY OTHER DIFFERENCE YOU CHOOSE TO PORTRAY IN YOUR CHARACTER, BUT PARTICULARLY WITH ELEMENTS OF A PERSON'S IDENTITY, THESE DIFFERENCES SHOULD BE PLAYED SINCERELY, NOT FOR JOKES, CARICATURES, OR A VILLAIN'S MOTIVATIONS--AND THEY SHOULD NOT BE EXOTIFIED OR PITIED. OF COURSE, AVOID STEREOTYPING AT ALL COSTS, AND IF YOU AREN'T SURE YOU CAN, DESIGN YOUR CHARACTER DIFFERENTLY!

THE PLAYER INTRODUCING THE CHARACTER WITH A DISABILITY OR NEURODIVERGENCE WILL ESTABLISH HOW MUCH IT IMPACTS THE NARRATIVE AND, IN DISCUSSION WITH THE GM, HOW IT MIGHT IMPACT MECHANICS. THEY COULD ALSO ESTABLISH THAT THEIR DISABILITY DOESN'T IMPACT THE NARRATIVE OR MECHANICS. SUPERHERO MEDIA IS FILLED WITH CHARACTERS WHO MIGHT NOT BE TRADITIONALLY ABLE-BODIED OR NEUROTYPICAL WHO ARE *EQUALS* TO THEIR TEAMMATES BOTH IN AND OUT OF COMBAT.

OF COURSE, IF YOU'RE PLAYING A CHARACTER IN A WAY THAT'S KEEPING ANOTHER PLAYER FROM HAVING FUN, CHANGE IT! THERE ARE LOTS OF WAYS FOR YOU TO ENJOY YOURSELF WITHOUT DECREASING OTHERS' ENJOYMENT.

# BEACONS

**Beacons** are a means of urgent communication. In *Kids in Capes*, when you want to tell the table something quickly, you can use the **Beacons** we've set up for you. While normally you'll be talking in character, these **Beacons** indicate to the table how you as a player feel about what's happening at the table.

Before playing, go through these phrases to ensure everyone understands them. They can be used as often as they are needed, as they provide the language players need to help cultivate care at the table.

***NOTE:*** WHILE THIS LANGUAGE IS BUILT SPECIFICALLY FOR THIS GAME, IF THERE ARE OTHER SAFETY TOOLS THAT WORK BEST FOR YOUR TABLE, GO FOR IT! AS LONG AS CARE AND CAUTION ARE BEING UPHELD AT YOUR TABLE, YOU ARE STICKING TO THE GAME'S RULES.

## BEACON VOCABULARY

### *SMASH CUT: IMMEDIATELY ENDS THE SCENE*

In game, the scene will immediately fade to black. Out of game, if it is a topic the player wants to talk about at the time, they may place it on the **Safety List** if needed. If the player does not want to talk about it and move on, continue with the next scene.

### RETCON: REWINDS AND ALLOWS THE SCENE TO GO IN A DIFFERENT DIRECTION

In game, the scene rewinds to a place where the players feel comfortable starting again. Out of game, place content on the **Safety List**, if needed. The use of **Retcon** is to change the tone, the content, or avoid ruining a player's fun. Once the scene returns to an agreed point by all the players, play begins again.

### FLOAT: CUES THAT THE STORY AND SCENE IS FINE FOR THE TABLE, BUT DOES NOT NEED TO BE PUSHED HARDER OR BECOME MORE DETAILED.

In game, the narrative stays with its current intensity and pace with no further descriptions needed. Out of game, everything is fine, and play can continue as normal. **Float** is a cue that the story and its elements are fine right now, but going further or providing more details may cause anyone discomfort.

### PUSH HARDER: INDICATES THAT THE STORY IS AMAZING AND COULD GO EVEN FURTHER, IF PERMITTED.

In game, this means players want the narrative and its contents to be more intense, which could mean more horrific, dangerous, or emotional—or funnier. This is an invitation for more by the players, if all do agree to **push harder**. If one person wishes for the scene to remain the same, or **float**, then the narrative will remain where it is.

This may also be used for descriptions or to further the plot and its consequences.

### PULSE CHECK: A QUICK VERBAL CHECK-IN WITH EVERYONE AT THE TABLE WHEN A PLAYER WORRIES THE CONTENT IS GOING TOO FAR.

This is an out of game cue asking players (GM included) about content you want to add that is not currently listed on the **Safety List** as a **line** or **veil** but may still be too much for folks. If everyone at the table does not enthusiastically consent, do not bring that content in.

### FREEZE FRAME: PROMPTS FOR A BREAK, EITHER IN OR OUT OF GAME

In game, this pauses the scene. Out of game, it calls for a break. A player may need to hydrate, stretch, use the bathroom, get snacks, or just decompress for a moment. For GMs, this may give you a moment to think of your next story beat as well. Freeze frames can happen as often as you need them, so don't be shy in calling for them .

Afterward, once everyone is back at the table, it could be a good time to check in with everyone. See how everyone feels about the game, which beats they would like to see, or answer any out-of-game questions they may have. If players are starting to show negative emotions, take the time and allow space for them, asking how you can help them. Sometimes, ending a game here may be the best solution in those situations, which leaves this freeze frame going until the next session.

## ROMANCE AND INTIMACY BETWEEN CHARACTERS

> **NOTE:** IN *KIDS IN CAPES*, CHARACTERS THAT ARE DIFFERENT AGES ARE NOT TO BE INTIMATE WITH EACH OTHER, EITHER IN GAME OR IN CHARACTERS' BACKSTORIES. YOUNGER CHARACTERS HAVING CRUSHES ON OLDER CHARACTERS IS FINE, BUT THAT IS THE LINE. DON'T BE GROSS AND WEIRD.

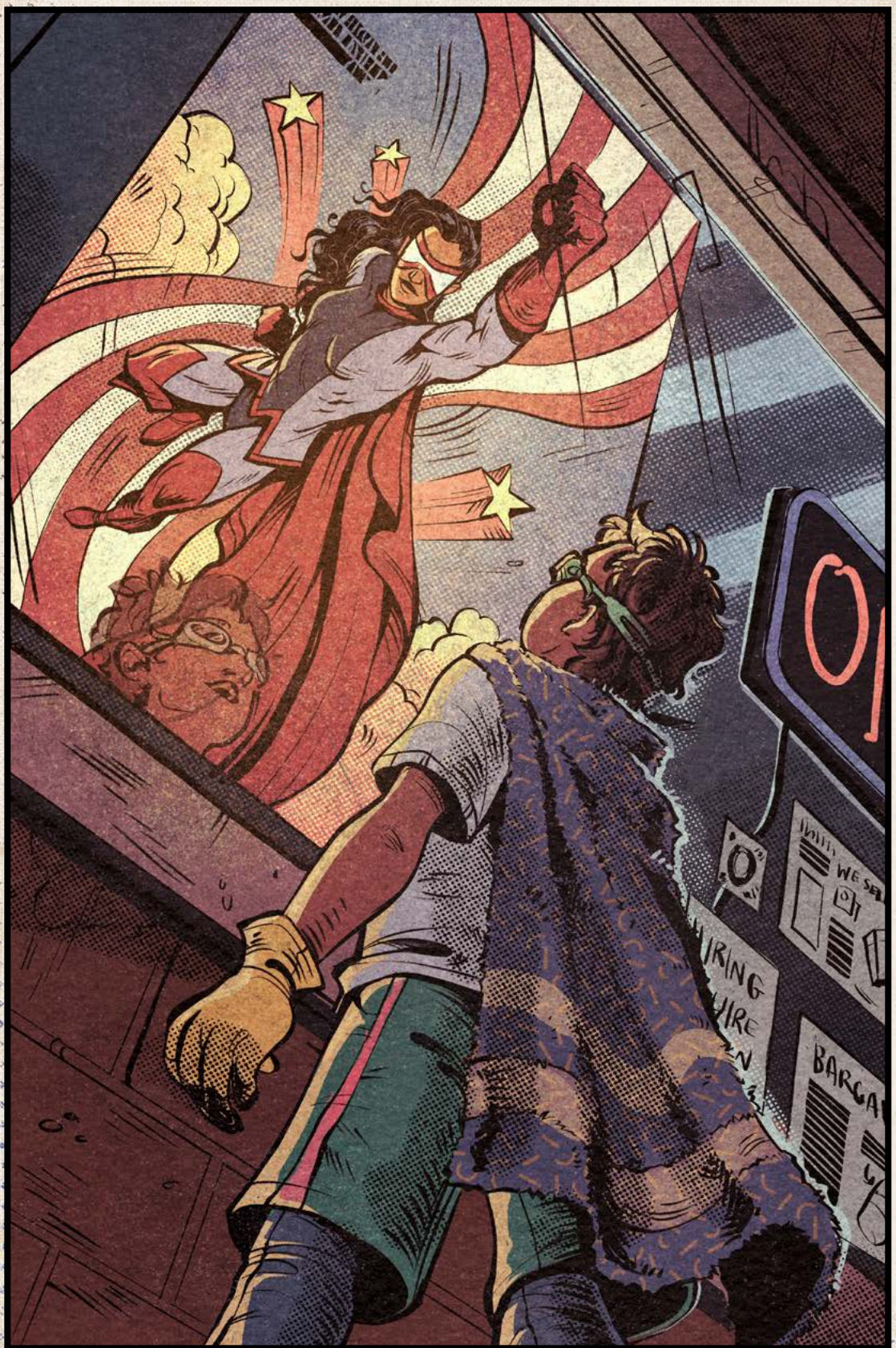
Feelings happen! In a shared-narrative game that gets into emotions and relationships, they are bound to develop and be expressed through roleplay. Be it heart-wrenching crushes, dating, unrequited love, heartbreak, or deep-seated love, a whole range of human emotions can be expressed through gameplay. Some players are really into this type of roleplay, while others are not. Everyone experiences romance and intimacy in different ways, so precautions must be in place to make sure everyone understands their fellow players' feelings.

In your **Safety List**, there is an area for consent in roleplaying romantic narratives. Like everything on the **Safety List**, this document is living and can be changed at any time. The first column is about romance with fellow PCs; the second column is for NPCs. You can either mark down "yes," "no," "ask first," or "see preferences." If you choose to "see preferences," please make a note of what your preferences are. A player may only be comfortable with romance with NPCs but fine with their character flirting with other PCs. Another player may just want to romance PCs, but their comfort with romance is, at most, hand-holding and hugs. Someone else might be okay so long as *they* initiate the flirting. And that's alright! Everyone has different preferences, and we want to have the language in place so players can have this conversation.

Like everything else in this game, communication is key. Please talk to the other players and use the **Beacons** whenever possible. Be thoughtful, be respectful, and be caring for everyone around the table. Because once again, you can't have fun if you aren't being safe.

# WORLD BUILDING

Throughout their near century of existence, comics and the stories we tell about superheroes have changed significantly. In the middle of the 20th century, comics told stories about nearly perfect characters striving to do their best. At this point in the 21st century, we're fascinated by complex, morally questionable heroes who do things that would make them the villains of earlier comics. Deciding on the kind of world you want your player characters (or PCs) to inhabit and the kinds of heroes they're going to be is essential to establishing the tone for your game.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# CREATING YOUR WORLD

Before starting to craft the specifics of the world with your fellow players, think about the kind of world you're all interested in playing in. Your later decisions will be much clearer and more synced up with each other by answering these questions as a group first.

### 1. WHEN DOES THE CAMPAIGN TAKE PLACE?

While the era doesn't dictate any of the subsequent questions, the year that the campaign will take place can serve as a starting point for your answers. To put it another way, just because your game's happening during the 1940s doesn't mean that you'll necessarily be playing Golden-Age-style heroes.

And if players want the campaign to take place in different years, talk about why that is the case. It could be that with a few clever anachronisms, the campaign can be what everyone wants. If everyone wants to play Chrome-Age heroes but one player loves the idea of their secret base being under an old-timey soda shop, Pop's Pop Shoppe can be the oldest soda shop in the US, still running in the town you create.

### 2. HOW SERIOUS OR SILLY DO YOU WANT THE GAME TO BE?

Are your heroes going to be cracking jokes as they take down absurd villains, or will this be a gritty, serious affair? Identifying some touchstones from popular media might be a good idea here.

### 3. HOW MUCH VIOLENCE DO YOU WANT THERE TO BE IN THE GAME?

Will it be a game with bloodless fist fights or a game where the injuries are realistic and graphic? Along these lines, what kinds of injuries might your characters expect to sustain? Will their lives ever be in danger?

### 4. WILL THE STAKES IN YOUR GAME BE LOCAL?

In most superhero stories, the stakes escalate over time. But since *Kids in Capes* focuses on the beginning of your PCs' story, you'll be starting smaller, probably with a threat to a person in the town or to the town itself. Certainly, the threat could be poised to spread beyond the town, but the team will likely be operating on the local level, within the town you will create in the next phase of Session Zero.

However, if you want the stakes of the game to start higher, discuss that with your group.

### 5. ARE SUPERPOWERS AND HEROES/VILLAINS ESTABLISHED IN YOUR WORLD YET?

Depending on the kind of game you all want to play, superheroes may be known and accepted—or even beloved. Or, they might be rumors discussed on unreliable corners of the internet—or previously unheard of until your

team gains their powers. Wherever you want to be along that spectrum will have implications for your narrative.

Ultimately, though, the answer at its most basic level will be "yes" or "no". Based on that, respond to one of the following sets of questions to flesh out these details.

If the answer is yes...

- How long have superpowered people existed? Which "ages" of heroes have existed?
- What kinds of powers are present? Are all heroes powerful enough to avert global cataclysms? Or are there only "street-level" heroes?
- How are superpowered people perceived? What is their legal status? Is there media about them? Are they idolized? Are they feared? A vital part of the community? Are they real but just thought to be conspiracy theories?
- How do people gain their powers? (There could be more than one way—or it could be yet unknown!)
- How is the world different because of superpowers (technology, history, global politics, etc)?

If the answer is no...

You will discover the answers to the previous questions during play. For games where you want to get started quickly, we suggest answering "No" to this question.

### 6. Roughly how many sessions will your group play before you get your powers?

In addition to being a good fact to establish before you start playing, knowing how quickly you'll get your powers is a good way to set the pace of the game. If you're playing only a few sessions, you might want to just have the first session without powers. If you're playing a year-long campaign, you might want to have as many as three sessions before your powers manifest.

For at least the first session of the game, you won't have your powers. That way, you can establish who your PCs are before you put on your cape—and what secret identity you'll be protecting.

## Ages of Comics

Superhero comics first appeared in 1939 with the publication of Action Comics, ushering in the Golden Age of Superheroes. These characters, the first of their type, tended to be very powerful and served as archetypes for many of the heroes in subsequent ages. Because these stories were intended for

children, and especially with the start of the second world war, these comics tended to feature a black-and-white morality. this simple perspective even permeated the physics of the world; entire houses could be picked up and set down by the heroes with no lasting damage. games set in this age will feature more powerful characters with a more fantastic style of game play. villains will be all bad, with no redeeming qualities, and heroes will be paragons of morality and propriety.

in 1956, dc introduced the silver age of comics by recreating their character the flash in the pages of *showcase #4*. this change targeted an older teenage audience, with the world and character becoming much more closely tied to reality than previously in the golden age. six years later, with characters like the fantastic four, spider-man, and the hulk, marvel's first titles took this even further, placing their characters in new york city as opposed to the fictional cities that dc's characters inhabited. the characters also had real-world problems associated with their lives and would feature considerably reduced powers that directly defined their identities as heroes. games set in this age will feature slightly less powerful characters than those set in the golden age. additionally, these characters, while still very heroic, will face everyday personal problems during their adventures.

the bronze age of comics began in the 1970s and shifted comics into even more reality-based storytelling with the introduction of socially relevant issues inspired by the politics and issues happening in the real world. poverty was one of the first such themes, but these bronze age stories eventually addressed other issues, such as drug addiction, sexism, and racism. this age saw heroes becoming more introspective about the use of their powers as well as their responsibilities to society overall. games set in this era will feature characters at the same power levels as the silver age, but with plots that occasionally force the characters to confront morally complex issues and social ills of the day.

the chrome age began in the early 90s and featured the rise of the anti-hero as a main character. as a result, comics featured much more violence than previous ages with lots of guns, explosions, and pouches... so, so many pouches. stories tended to be much darker, with bloodshed used as a solution at levels not seen since the era of pulp heroes. a chrome age game will easily be the darkest of any of the other ages. with the prevalence of anti-heroes, gun-wielding characters with power levels not much above a regular person will exist alongside

HEROES WITH STANDARD POWERS. ALL OF THESE CHARACTERS WILL ALSO WIELD THEIR POWERS WITH LESS RESPONSIBILITY AND LESS CONCERN FOR COLLATERAL DAMAGE.

IN 2008, COMICS ENTERED THE MEDIA AGE, WHERE THE SUCCESS OF SUPERHERO MOVIES, AND LATER TELEVISION SERIES, WOULD TAKE HEROES INTO THE MAINSTREAM PUBLIC CONSCIOUSNESS. THESE FILMS AND SHOWS BECAME EVEN FURTHER TIED TO REALITY AND MUCH MORE CINEMATIC. THE SUCCESS OF THESE PRESENTATIONS THEN FED BACK INTO THE COMICS THEMSELVES, RESULTING IN MORE CINEMATIC STORYTELLING ON THEIR PART AS WELL. IN ADDITION, THIS AGE SAW THE BEGINNING OF CHARACTERS INTRODUCED IN THE MOVIES BEING LATER BROUGHT INTO THE COMIC BOOKS THAT INSPIRED THEM. STORYLINES GENERALLY RETURNED TO THE LESS DARK STYLE OF THE SILVER AND BRONZE AGES, AND GAMES FROM THIS ERA WILL FOLLOW A FORMAT SIMILAR TO A MODERN-DAY ACTION FILM OR TELEVISION SERIES.

Chantal, the game's GM, is working with her players to answer the world-creation questions. Her players—Alex, Ben, Udo, and Yeva—begin by suggesting that the game takes place in the mid-90s during the height of the Grunge era. Udo suggests playing a pretty serious game, but Yeva and Ben push back on that. They agree that they'd like the plot to be serious but would like to make sure that there's still room for them to have fun with some of the more ridiculous elements of the 90s—and that sounds good to everyone.

In terms of violence, the players all agree that they're happy to vividly describe their attacks, but they aren't interested in graphic descriptions of the outcomes of those attacks. Chantal confirms that this means that they want her to say that something breaks rather than describing exactly how it looks. For the stakes, the whole group agrees that they'll be saving their small town, not the world—or even the country.

The table agrees that superpowers are established in the world of the game, but Alex suggests that maybe there have only been a handful of heroes before. Ben agrees and adds that maybe there was a group of heroes and villains who got their powers 60 years ago, then another group that got their powers 30 years ago. The powers, they decide, are all powerful enough to change the course of history, but not so powerful that a hero could single-handedly stop nuclear war. They're certainly more powerful than "street-level" heroes, though.

Udo offers that the good guys are idolized, but they're all getting on in years, especially the heroes who got their powers in the 1930s. The villains are, of course, reviled, but the previous heroes worked together well enough to either capture the villains or drive them underground.

Chantal suggests that maybe the heroes and villains get their powers through governmental experiments, but Yeva points out that there would likely be a lot more and that they wouldn't come out only every 30 years. Alex suggests that maybe the source of powers is unknown but that they emerge when specific cicada broods come out, which would mean it's every 17 years. The table's excited about that, so they decide it means that, if their game takes place in 1993, the earlier powers emerged in 1976 and 1959.

In terms of changes to the world, they agree that there's less tension between countries because of the emergence of superpowers. The war in Vietnam, for example, never happened because of the reduction in tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union thanks to their heroes working together. There are still geopolitical tensions, but they're tamped down.

In thinking about how long they want to play without powers, Chantal asks if it's okay with the group to play one more full session after the world-creation and character-creation session without powers, then gain them in the following one. Everyone thinks this sounds great, and Ben says he's up for playing about 10 sessions, give or take a few. The table agrees.

## CREATING YOUR TOWN

Once you've answered those questions, you can start thinking about the town where your adventure will start, the town that all of the PCs are from. Keeping in mind the earlier discussion, answer the questions below, going around the table with a player answering one, then the next player to their left answering the next. Of course, discuss the answers to make sure you all agree.

- Our campaign takes place in... *(Name of town or city and its state or region— and it doesn't have to be a real place!)*
- Economically, our town is... *(flourishing? floundering? growing? etc.)*
- Our school's name and mascot are...
- A notable local landmark is... *(repeat if you have more than 5 players)*
- A local hangout for kids is... *(repeat if you have more than 5 players)*
- A recent unsolved crime in our town is...
- A secretive group in our town is...
- A person revered in our town is... *(repeat regardless of player count)*
- A person scorned in our town is... *(repeat regardless of player count)*
- What group (other town, sports team, etc.) do many from your town butt heads with? This could be a group within the town or from outside. *(repeat if you have more than 5 players)*

After you've answered all of these questions, have each of the players share a rumor they've heard about strange occurrences that have happened lately in the town. These definitely don't have to be true; rumors rarely are. Sometimes, they have a bit of truth to them, and sometimes, they're completely fabricated. However, they'll give the GM some ideas for the game.

The group is now ready to create their town. Alex says they'd like the campaign to take place in Worchester, Michigan, a fictional coastal town on the shores of Lake Huron. Ben says that he'd like to see the town flourishing and being a place where there are quite a few well-to-do citizens, and Udo counters that he'd like there to be some economic disparity in the town, which he thinks would offer more places for the characters to be from different backgrounds.

Udo says that Worchester High School's mascot is the narwhal, which the table loves. Building off of that, Yeva says that a notable local landmark is the massive narwhal statue in the water by the public beach. There, about a century ago, a pod of narwhals is reported to have appeared,but there's no photographic evidence to support this claim. Ben suggests that a common challenge for kids is to swim to the narwhal and tap its horn. Alex points out that a group of narwhals is called a blessing and offers that, maybe, there's a belief that touching the narwhal's horn can grant a wish. This makes it a popular hangout for kids in the summer, but Alex offers another: the arcade, where tweens and young teens spend quarter after quarter trying to beat the high scores on the games.

Ben then says that a recent unsolved crime in Worchester was a series of break-ins at local jewelry shops. The current theory is that it's a highly organized group of thieves, but security footage always becomes blurry during the robberies. Udo creates a secretive group called Barther Pharmaceuticals, a company that came to town a few years ago but that no one seems to know much about—or who works there.

Yeva offers the high school principal, Cecilia Grenier, as a person revered in the town for how she keeps the school running smoothly and handles student discipline. Alex says another person everyone loves is the owner of the local garden center, Juma Masi. He's an amateur botanist, and while his plant hybrids are always impressive, his prices are always more than fair.

Ben and Udo offer two people the town scorns. Ben says the chief of police, Duncan "Dunc" Murdoch, is a real stickler for rules, especially when it comes to teens, who he says are "the scourge of any polite society." Udo says the local arcade owner, Kristian Kristofer, is scorned by the tweens and teens for generally being a jerk, especially when a machine goes awry and he should offer a refund. Ben suggests it might be fun for the two reviled citizens to be married, and the table agrees.

Yeva suggests that a good group for the town to butt heads with would be the local private high school, Grey Gates Preparatory Academy. Their

campus is split between Worchester and the neighboring town, Eagleton, which leads to Grey Gates trying to weasel out of paying taxes to either town. It's a boarding school, and very few locals are accepted, though few even *want* to apply. The students, when they come into town, are generally rude to locals.

Finally, it's time for rumors. Alex says they heard that so many machines malfunction at the arcade because some of them aren't actual arcade games but knock-off versions that Kristian made to avoid paying for them. Ben says that many of the residents are convinced that the giant concrete narwhal has moved. Even recent photographs seem to have it in a different place. Udo says that Dunc Murdoch arrested some kids for trespassing onto Grey Gates about a month ago, and the rumor is that he stole money from them while booking them. Yeva closes out the town creation by saying that there's a rumor that Grey Gates will try to buy more of the town—and that the planning board will likely let them.

# CHARACTER CREATION

The core of any RPG is the character you'll be embodying. You and your GM will work together to create a character you'll be excited to play, one who you can relate to in important ways—but who also allows you to escape the real world.

If there are parameters that you, as a player or GM, want the characters to have, like if you want all of them to be in middle school, please set them. You'll be playing in the world you previously created, so work within those boundaries. A conversation with the GM and your fellow players can really assist in putting everyone on the same page.

## OVERVIEW OF PROCESS

When creating your character, go through the following steps in this order:

1. Choose and share the ***CAPE*** and ***POWER*** you'll eventually get
2. Select a ***TROPE*** and start filling out your character sheet as you make initial trope selections for your character
3. Introduce your character to the rest of the group and establish character relationships
4. Select the finishing touches for your character

One important thing to keep in mind when creating your characters is that all of them should be connected through one central location where they go almost every day, like a school. If you want to have characters from different age groups, make sure that you're developing a reason for all of them to be together frequently. However, unless discussed, the assumption is that all of the PCs are students at the same school.

## SELECTING CAPE AND POWER

Even though you don't start the game with a power or as part of a superhero team, you'll select your eventual role on the team (your "**Cape**") and your superhuman ability (your "**Power**"). Both will impact you mechanically and narratively, but you'll have quite a bit of latitude with both.

While making these selections now may seem counterintuitive, doing so will help you guide your roleplaying even while you're still powerless. For example, the team leader who can turn their skin to stone will likely be a very different person from a character who manipulates probability from the back of the fight—and players will want to play the characters who'll become those heroes differently.

At this point in the creation process, just think about your **Cape** and **Power** narratively. When your powers manifest, you'll establish the mechanical impacts of these features of your character.

THE BRAWLER

THE CRYPTIC

THE GUARDIAN

## CAPES

A superhero team is made up of several different roles. Each role serves a specific function on a team to ensure the group becomes a well-oiled machine to take down the forces of evil. The six **Capes** are:

**The Brawler** is your classic close-up fighter. They may be a martial artist, a cybernetically enhanced mutant, or anything in between. Your role on the team is to get up close and personal when things get rough.

**The Cryptic** wields mysterious powers that allow them to see and manipulate reality in a way that looks like magic to most people. Maybe your character wields the power of ancient mystic arts or is imbued with powers that allow them to read or affect other creatures' minds. Your role will be one of stealth and manipulation, swinging the battle in your team's favor.

**The Guardian** supports other team members or the team as a whole—in addition to some offense. Your character may be a superior athlete with armor and a shield, or they may be able to manipulate force fields to block villains' attacks. Your role will be more one of supporting other team members in a fight.

THE SHOOTER

THE TACTICIAN

THE TANK

**The Shooter** is to ranged combat as the Brawler is to close combat. Your character may wield the power of some mysterious cosmic radiation or be able to control the earth itself, hurling massive rains of rock at your foes. Your role is to bring the offense from a distance with any variety of projected powers.

**The Tactician** leads the team. They may be the most powerful member of the team or just a regular person with technology and the mind of the world's greatest detective. Your role will be to make critical calls, generally on the fly, in tough situations.

**The Tank** anchors the group in battle. Generally, they are easy to spot by their size—but not always. What is always true is their ability to take a lot of damage from extremely tough armor or the ability to redirect it away from team members. Your role will be to draw attacks away from other team members to yourself.

As you're making these selections, talk about them with the table. Most teams have one of each **Cape** on their team, but in the group you create, there might not be one of each **Cape**—or there might be more than one. While having each role on the team will balance it, the GM can always set up scenarios to reflect your team. Create the team that will be the most fun for all of you to play, and don't pressure any player to accept a **Cape** they're not excited about.

## POWERS

The **Cape** is the character's identity as part of the superhero team, but the **Power** is their identity as an individual hero. Unlike **Capes**, a character's **Power** will be uniquely their own. Making a complete list of all possible superpowers would consume far too many pages and, even if this *were* done, it is almost certain that some players would still come up with ideas outside of those presented.

Given this, a character's powers in *Kids in Capes* will be a shared creative process between the player and GM. We have included eight broad categories that cover many of the powers seen in comics and movies. These are not all-inclusive and should be thought of more as a source of ideas than a strict set of guidelines. If a player comes up with something completely outside any of these categories, the GM should go with it and work with the player like they would with any other power.

As you're creating your character, think about the end goal for their **Cape** and **Power**: their **Capstone**. This is the powerful ability they'll get before the final session of your campaign—the signature move that will define them as a hero and as a part of the team when they come into their own. Keeping in mind that this is the most complete version of your character's abilities, you will then want to create a list of lesser abilities that fall within this final

power. You will use these abilities to build the **Power Skill Tree** of your character towards that **Capstone** power.

If, for example, you're planning to be able to teleport across long distances for your **Capstone**, a good starting point would be to teleport short distances to line up better hits on your enemies. You haven't figured out how to *dodge* hits yet, but you've started using your powers offensively.

And remember: you're not committing to this **Capstone** at this point! As you're playing, you may find that something else is more fun for you. Until you actually take your **Capstone**, you're not locked into it yet. Change your mind on this as often as you want, though, after a few sessions of playing with your **Powers**, you'll have a strong idea for where you want to go with it.

When using your **Power** for a check, either in combat or not, you'll use the total of your rolls on your appropriate **Stat Die** and on your **Power Die**, which starts at a **d4** and can be increased by spending **Growth Points (GP)**. (See "**Power Growth - Power Die Increases**" on page 88 for more about increasing your **Power Die.**)

## POWER CATEGORIES

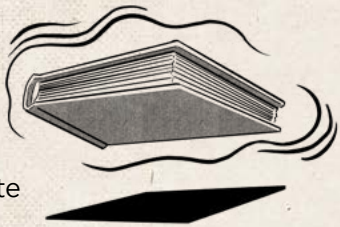
**Body Control:** A character with this type of power can do superhuman things with their body. Perhaps they can stretch their limbs to crazy lengths. Maybe that can alter their size, either becoming a ten-story giant or shrinking down smaller than a proton. Maybe they can change their shape into any sort of animal, a completely unknown form or simply take on the appearance of any other person. In some cases, this might cover a character who has trained themself so extensively that they have transcended expected human limits.

**Companions:** Sometimes, a mysterious object crashes from the sky and a tiny, fire-breathing dragon appears from the wreckage and won't leave your side. Sometimes, a symbiote escapes from a lab and bonds to you...quite literally. Whatever it is, you're linked with this companion and look out for each other when the going gets tough. If you're interested in playing a character without innate powers, this is a good option!

**Energy Control:** Characters with this power type wield control over such things as light, radiation, electricity, or even fire. This may be as simple as firing blasts from their hands but could also include other forms of manipulation. Perhaps the character can create walls of fire or alter the flow of electricity in a circuit. They may radiate energy from their entire body such that they glow or appear engulfed in flames.

**Matter Control:** With these types of powers, a character could project matter over a distance either by firing it from their hands or simply throwing boulders. Some may be able to shape matter into shields or other simple objects via their force of will. At the more complex end, perhaps the character can transform matter itself from one element to another.

**Mental Control:** These characters have abilities that most people would describe as psychic powers. These could include the ability to read minds or go as far as the ability to control others' minds or trick them with illusions. Other powers could include telekinesis, psychometry (the ability to learn about an individual from an inanimate object they touched), empathy, or the like.



**Objects:** Maybe the character has inherited a magical weapon of divine origin or wields a shield made of some rare superpowered metal that doesn't obey the normal laws of physics. Or perhaps they have a utility belt that carries a variety of tools, allowing them to fight crime. These objects will help you fight the good fight. This is a good power if you plan to play a character without innate powers.

**Stealth:** These powers give a character superhuman abilities to avoid detection. This could be as simple as the character has the power to turn invisible. Or maybe the character can walk through solid matter as easily as air. Perhaps the character has some sort of mystical training that allows them to merge with shadows.

**Travel Power:** A player will choose this power category for a character whose main power is a unique mode of transportation that grants them several different abilities. A super speedy character who is the fastest person on Earth is probably one of the more classic examples, but maybe the character can teleport and is able to use this power in a number of ways, including combat. Other examples include things like the ability to travel through mirrors, walk on walls, or swing on ropes or vines. The player's imagination is the only limit on a travel power character.

There's tremendous variation within the categories for powers, so even if everyone at the table has Energy Control, everyone could control different kinds of energy: heat, radiation, kinetic energy, electricity—to name a few. And when controlling that particular kind of energy, there are many ways that could manifest.

For example, comics are filled with characters who manipulate heat, putting them in the Energy Control category. But beyond the choice for these characters to control that particular kind of energy, the way this control *manifests* is different. Some can engulf their bodies in flames—while others can only ignite parts of their bodies. Some manipulate heat in order to fly.

Some can shape and move existing flames, not create them. Others still can project blasts of flame from their hands, but not control them well.

Of course, in superhero media, heroes and villains often have multiple kinds of powers. A hero might have super strength *and* an iconic weapon associated with them. Or a hero might be able to teleport *and* blend into shadows. Absolutely feel free to merge powers as you learn about what you can do with your new powers. But remember, *Kids in Capes* helps you tell the story of how your powers first manifest, which means you won't be able to do everything all at once.

Alex decides that their character will be a Brawler with Body Control powers. Rather than any sort of manipulation, their character will have unbelievable reaction times and reflexes along with the speed and strength of an elite athlete. Their powers won't manifest in any obvious way, even in their Capstone, when they'll be able to see from small muscle movements what their opponents are going to do before they even know they're going to do them.

Yeva says that her character will be able to manipulate energy, which she thinks would be good for a Shooter. At first, she'll only be able to fire blasts of energy to attack. As a Capstone, she'll be able to use the energy manipulation telekinetically, possibly to turn her enemies so that they take the full force of her blasts. At least that's her idea right now. She could always change her mind!

Udo says his character will be a Tank that absorbs and redirects energy. He thinks that he'll start out being able to absorb the kinetic energy from hits, then gradually expand to be able to redirect it—first as stronger hits, and eventually, as a Capstone, as blasts of energy. Along the way, he says that he'll grow his powers to be able to deal with more kinds of energy, possibly playing off of the energy that Yeva's character can project.

Ben says that he's playing a Cryptic with a kind of Matter Control or Mental Control power, all connected to altering the world the way an artist can alter a painting. Ben says that to start, he'll be able to see things like a cubist painting looks, showing him multiple angles at once, which will help him better defend himself. Ultimately, as his Capstone, he'll be able to share his perspective with his teammates to help them attack more effectively—or to confuse enemies' senses by flashing this chaotic blur of perspectives to them. Along the way, though, he also wants to be able to create objects by drawing them, though he doesn't want that to be his starting power.

## SELECTING A TROPE

To streamline the character creation process, we've created a set of **Tropes** that you can use at the start of the game to get into character more quickly. These **Tropes** fall into categories like Escaped Experiment, Goody Goody, and Redemption Seeker. They will offer suggestions for your character's **Stat dice** and streamline some choices for you. These **Tropes** and their details are in **"Appendix C - Tropes"** on page 134.

Choose the **Trope** that you're most interested in playing. There are no right or wrong answers here, and your GM will work with you to make sure that, whatever type of character you choose, you'll be central to the story of the game. Always remember that **Tropes** are touchstones intended to help you jump in. They are not stereotypes to play in boring, cliche, or harmful ways. True, the Misunderstood Punk isn't likely to be as charming as Popular Kid, but, as in life, be careful not to assume too much about a person based only on a few descriptors.

In the details about your selected **Trope** in **Appendix C** on page 134, you'll find suggested **Strengths**, suggested **Flaws**, and two questions specific to that **Trope**. These will help you flesh out who you are. Choose two **Strengths** and one **Flaw** from their respective lists. Both **Strengths** and **Flaws** have mechanical implications for your character related to **Adversity Tokens**.

S**trengths** are mechanical advantages that your character will have when playing the game. Some are always active, meaning that you do not need to spend **Adversity Tokens** to use them. Others will have an **Adversity Token** cost listed in their description, which you need to spend to use their effects. Each player starts the game with 3 Adversity Tokens in their supply. For more on these tokens, see **"Adversity Tokens"** on page 44.

A **Flaw** will help you develop your character's personality and allow you the opportunity to earn more **Adversity Tokens**. When you fail a roll because of acting on your **Flaw**, you'll earn an additional **Adversity Token**. But make sure you're not leaning too heavily into your **Flaw** and making the game less fun for your fellow players, or acting in ways no reasonable person would. For example, if they're trying to stop a falling meteor from destroying their town, even the laziest character wouldn't shrug and go to the fridge to get a soda. And if your flaw is being rude, pull it back if the other players aren't having fun with it. It's okay for a character to annoy the other characters, but it's not okay for a player to annoy their fellow players.

For the **Trope** questions, you don't need to answer these out loud, but you should know what your answers are. It may be beneficial to answer these questions after you create relationships with the other characters as discussed in **"Introductions & Questions"** on page 30, so even if you don't want the other *characters* to know the answers, it will help your fellow *players* to know them.

If you want, you're welcome to reassign your **Stat Dice**. You just need to have each die assigned to only one stat. Also, with the GM's permission, you can choose a **Strength** or **Flaw** that isn't on the list for the **Trope** you chose. The **Tropes** are starting points, not a set of limitations.

Then, give your character a name—or a nickname that they go by. While in real life we can't tell much about a person just from their name, when choosing for your character, lean into evocative names. There's a big difference between what "Jen," "Jennifer," and "Jenny" evoke. Of course, give yourself a last name, too, and make sure your name's in keeping with the tone that you've established for the game.

Yeva tells the table that Audrey Smith, her character, will have the Not of This World Trope, meaning she's from somewhere else in the galaxy. She arrived here a few years ago and has managed to blend in well, which she says gives her two different Strengths, Cool Under Pressure and Technocrat. Any time her cover has almost slipped before, she has casually explained it away, and technology on Earth is nothing compared to her home planet, so it's easy for her to work with. As a Flaw, she chooses Insecure, specifically about how well she'll be able to carry out the mission for which her family was sent to Earth. For her Trope questions, she decides that she misses her friends most of all, especially since she cannot communicate with them for fear of detection. Other than that, though, she says that she's handling the transition to Earth well, but that romance on Earth eludes her. She can't understand why anyone would be interested in dating a being that has not yet fully matured, which books tell her Earthlings will not do until they reach the age of 25.

Ben says that his character, Hermes Moreau, will be an Ambitious Wannabe. As an aspiring artist, he's always trying to get others to appreciate his work. That means that the popularity he's after has more to do with people recognizing his skills rather than being one of the cool kids. So, he shifts the Trope questions a bit and decides that being recognized for his artistic gifts would mean that he feels like the years of dedication have paid off. In terms of what he'd sacrifice to get that, he says that he rarely socializes so that he can hone his craft. For Strengths, he chooses Intuitive and Unassuming. For a Flaw, he chooses Gullible, which he thinks makes sense because he doesn't interact with many people to know signs of deception.

Alex's character, River Tse, will be an Honorable Scout. As Strengths, they take Mechanic and Prepared. As a Flaw, they take Dogmatic. They have a strong sense of right and wrong, and sometimes they have trouble seeing even a reasonable alternative to their perspectives. For the Trope questions, Alex says that River's aunt, Kalsang, got them into the great outdoors and

automotive repair. But, to spend as much time in the great outdoors as they want to, River has had to give up studying as hard as they know they should.

Udo names his character Chi Ejike and gives him the Redemption Seeker Trope. He chooses Heroic and Tough as his Strengths and, given what's happened to him in the past, Paranoid as his Flaw. Recently, his mother was killed in the same car accident that left his father permanently unable to walk. Though Chi was driving and the other driver hit them head-on, he walked away from the accident needing nothing more than a few stitches. The accident wasn't Chi's fault, which eyewitnesses confirmed, but he can't shake the feeling that he could have done more if he were a better driver, which answers his first question about why he's seeking redemption. In terms of whose respect he's trying to earn, he's not sure. Udo thinks that, generally, Chi will want the community to respect him as a protector, not just think of him as that kid behind the wheel of that car—but Chi hasn't developed that desire quite yet.

Finally, Chantal asks the players if they want to switch any of their stats in their Tropes, and Alex and Yeva say that they do. Audrey's Brawn and Fight will be swapped, and River's Fight and Brawn will be swapped.

## CHARACTER STATS

The Trope you choose will determine how you assign dice to your six stats. The higher the possible value on a die, the better your character is with that stat. The six stats are:

- **Brains:** This stat determines how book-smart a character is. It will determine how well they understand problems, how well they did or are doing in school, and how quickly they can solve intellectual puzzles.
  *Likely verbs: calculate, confuse, decode, learn, remember, solve, understand.*
- **Brawn:** This stat determines how much brute strength a character has. It does not determine how well they can fight—just how well they can lift things and how athletic they are overall. It also determines how physically intimidating a character is.
  *Likely verbs: bend, climb, carry, hurl, intimidate, swim, throw.*
- **Fight:** This stat determines how scary your character is, both in and out of a fight. They'll be able to learn to fight or to use weapons more easily. It also determines how dangerous a character appears and how much it looks like they can handle themselves if things get physical.
  *Likely verbs: kick, parry, punch, scare, shoot, threaten, wrestle.*

- **Flight:** This stat determines how fast a character is as well as how skilled they are at evading their problems (literally, figuratively, or both). Characters with a high Flight will be fast and tough to catch both physically and verbally, smooth talkers whose legs and mouths are quick.
  *Likely verbs: avoid, dodge, drive, escape, evade, outrun, snatch*
- **Charm:** This stat determines how socially adept a character is and how well they read the emotions of another person or group of people. Characters with a high Charm can talk themselves out of tough situations and into good ones with relative ease, within reason.
  *Likely verbs: convince, entice, flatter, lie, persuade, sweet talk, tric.*
- **Grit:** This stat determines how hard it is to unsettle a character emotionally or physically. Characters with a high Grit will be able to keep a level head in the worst of situations and will be able to keep their cool even when pushed hard. Finally, this stat also determines how street-smart a character is.
  *Likely verbs: brace, endure, refuse, resist, see through, struggle against, withstand.*

The higher a stat is, the better a character is at skills involving that stat—and the more likely they are to succeed when using that stat. While there's no guarantee that you'll roll your maximum, characters generally will be better able to pass checks with their higher dice.

| Die | Brief Explanation |
|---|---|
| **d20** | **Superb:** Even upon first meeting you, anyone would be able to readily tell that this is a strength of yours. You are remarkably good with respect to this stat. |
| **d12** | **Impressive:** People who know you would say that you're pretty good with respect to this stat, but it wouldn't be something that's obvious during a first encounter. |
| **d10** | **Above Average:** You aren't remarkably good in terms of this stat, but you're slightly above average. |
| **d8** | **Below Average:** You aren't too bad in terms of this stat, but you're certainly not good, either. You're just slightly worse than average. |
| **d6** | **Bad:** People who know you would say that you're pretty bad with respect to this stat, but it wouldn't be something that's obvious during a first encounter. |
| **d4** | **Terrible:** Upon first meeting you, people would immediately be able to tell that this is a weakness of yours. You are remarkably bad with respect to this stat. |

When creating your character, think carefully about how your **d20** stat and your **d4** stat balance each other out. If your character has a **d20** in **Charm** and a **d4** in **Flight**, consider what that means for your character. Have they always talked their way out of their problems instead of having to run from them—including gym class? Or were they always so slow that they had to use humor and kindness to compensate for their inability to escape? Think about how your other stats' values relate to this balance, too.

Stats will also be used to resolve skill checks and combat, which we'll address in **"Stat Checks"** on page 41 and **"Combat"** on page 57.

## STRESS-BOOSTED STATS AND STRESS-REDUCED STATS

When encountering stressful situations, modifiers to your character's stats will come into play. Each character has two stats influenced by how stressed they are: one that increases and one that decreases. We'll address **Stress** in **"Stress"** on page 58, where you'll find more information about these modifiers, but as you're creating your character, you'll want to identify which stat increases as the character becomes stressed (their "**Stress-Boosted Stat**") and which stat decreases (their "**Stress-Reduced Stat**").

For now, think about these as roleplaying tools and ways to know your character better. When they're under pressure, what stat do they reliably go to help themself? If their **Stress-Boosted Stat** is **Charm**, then they try to sweet talk their way out of stressful situations. If, on the other hand, their **Stress-Boosted Stat** is **Grit**, then they usually try to just tough it out, grinning and bearing the stress.

On the flip side, each character will also have a stat reduced as they become more stressed. Are they the kind of character who always says the wrong thing when they're frustrated? If so, **Charm** is probably their **Stress-Reduced Stat**. Or are they the kind of person who freezes up in high-pressure situations? If so, **Flight** is likely their **Stress-Reduced Stat**.

You can choose any stat you want given how you see your character. However, you can't choose the same stat to be both your **Stress-Boosted Stat** and your **Stress-Reduced Stat**.

Hermes's Stress-Boosted Stat is Charm, and his Stress-Reduced Stat is Brawn. When he's under duress, Ben explains, the adrenaline turns his muscles shaky, but it sharpens his ability to sweet talk his way out of things.

River becomes tougher with their Grit increasing but less charismatic with their Charm decreasing. There's a right way and a wrong way to do things, they explain, and you just need to be tough enough to make it happen. There's no need to mince words or play nice when things get bad.

For Chi, stress makes him smarter, increasing his Brains—but decreasing his Flight. Even on a subconscious level, he has no interest in running away from trouble. Instead, he tends to start rationalizing when he's under pressure.

Finally, Audrey's Stress-Boosted Stat is Flight, and her Stress-Reduced Stat is Grit. The more stressed she gets, the more she wants to get away, at least from the center of the action, and her flexibility and fleetness of foot come at the expense of squaring up to take a hit.

## CHARACTERS' AGES

The age of the characters has implications throughout the character creation process and during gameplay, which the rules will discuss as they become important. For now, what's important is to decide on your characters' ages.

Remember, characters can be from different age groups as long as you've established a reason for all of them to be in the same location frequently, like in the same school. If the characters are a mixture of ages, the players (including the GM) need to establish what links the characters together from before the start of your first session. After that, you'll be more strongly linked by the events of that first session.

At the start of the character creation process, the character's age determines what strengths each character gets for free and which two stats have a +1 modifier.

| Age | Stat Adjustments | Bonus Strength |
|---|---|---|
| **Child (12 & younger)** | +1 Charm<br>+1 Flight | **Just Having Fun:** At the end of every combat, reduce your Stress by 1 before determining the effects of Stress. |
| **Teen (13 to 19 years)** | +1 Brawn<br>+1 Fight | **Rebellious:** When persuading or resisting persuasion from children, add +3 to rolls. When resisting persuasion from adults, add +3 to rolls. |
| **Adult (20 & older)** | +1 Brains<br>+1 Grit | **Skilled at...** Choose a skill the character has learned from their life experiences or employment. They gain the "Skilled at..." Strength for that. |

The group pretty quickly agrees that they want to be Teens, which gives them the high school as their central location and a reason for them all, different as they are, to be together regularly. None of them are interested in being older or younger, so they all mark +1 to their Fight and Brawn.

# INTRODUCTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Now that you have sketched out the basics of your character, introduce yourself to the other characters at the table. You'll learn more yourself as you answer relationship questions, but give the table the broad brushstrokes first.

If you want to suggest relationships between yourself and others, you can suggest that now as well. Or, you can hold off on this until you get to the relationship questions. Here are some possible relationships: siblings, step-siblings, and half-siblings; cousins; classmates; best friends or worst enemies; neighbors; and significant others or exes. Regardless of the relationships you choose, all characters should already know the names of all the other characters.

This is a good time to start talking as your character: "We know each other from back when we were in grade school" rather than "My character dated their character for a few years."

Udo suggests that they should all be in the same grade, since that would increase how often they're together. They agree on being Juniors, so 16 and 17. Yeva points out that Audrey would be a bit older than that...but can certainly *look* 16. Audrey and Chi have been lab partners in the past. Hermes

and River just happen to be in most of the same classes, and they're friendly with each other, if not friends.

Ben suggests that if it's okay with Yeva, when Audrey first moved to Worchester, Hermes asked her out, but she was uninterested and he backed off; Yeva thinks that helps to lean into Audrey's disinterest in dating humans, especially unformed ones. But she confirms with Ben that this isn't going to be a will-they-won't-they at the table. Ben agrees and concludes that Hermes has moved on.

Chi and River were close friends growing up and are still close because they're neighbors. Although they run in different social circles, they often walk home together. Other than that, River and Audrey don't really know each other, and Hermes and Chi run in such different social circles that they've never interacted much at all.

Having things broadly established, each of you will answer questions about the other characters. You'll do this one at a time, passing the list of questions around the table, collaborating to make the established relationships more complex and to hint at information about who you don't know. This process will enrich the game, even before the strange events start happening.

Depending on the length of time you have for character creation, you could take one of three approaches to answering the questions: **Quick Start**, **One Each**, or **Complete**.

- For the **"Quick Start"** version, each of you will answer just one question about just one other player. This question will come from **Appendix F, Relationship Questions for a Character You Know - Positive**, found on page 143 or **Appendix G, Relationship Questions for a Character You Know - Negative**, found on page 144—depending on the relationship you have with that character. In this version, do not use the questions from **Appendix H**, **Relationship Questions for a Character You Don't Know**. You must have an established relationship with the character you're answering the question about.
- For the "**One Each**" version, each of you will answer just one question about each other character. For each character, choose one question from the **Positive** (**Appendix F** on page 143), **Negative** (**Appendix G** on page 144), and **Character You Don't Know** (**Appendix H** on page 145). Base this choice on your relationship or lack of relationship with each character, but make sure that you have an established relationship with at least half of the other characters—though you can have an established relationship with every other character if you want! Also, remember that in a small town, you'll know nearly everyone by sight, even if you don't have a relationship with them.

- For the "**Complete**" version, you will answer two questions, a **Positive** one and a **Negative** one, about each character you know. You will also answer one question from the **Character You Don't Know** list about characters you don't know. Make sure you have an established relationship with at least half of the other characters—but you can have as many established relationships as you want, and remember that you'll know all of the other characters by sight even if you don't have a relationship with them.

We strongly recommend taking the time to do the **Complete** version. The answers will give you the richest storytelling and roleplaying. It will also give your GM more hooks to use later, but it will also take the most time. If you're planning to play a longer campaign of *Kids in Capes*, the time it takes is worth it. Devote as much of your Session Zero as you need to building these relationships!

For shorter games, choose either of the other options, though the **Quick Start** version is intended only for games that you need to start very quickly. Again, the more connections you have between characters, the richer your game will be.

To answer a question, select the list that you want to use, roll a **d20**, and answer the corresponding question. If the question has already been answered or if it doesn't make sense for your character, you may, if you want, reroll or choose an adjacent question to answer.

## QUICK START EXAMPLE

River rolls a positive question for Hermes and gets the question, "This character was ready to go against their morals to help you. Why wouldn't you let them?" They say that recently, their History teacher had their gradebook go missing and accused River of stealing it during lunch. Hermes said he was with them that period, but River didn't want to drag him into it, so they said, "No, we had lunch on Tuesday. Mr. Haller is talking about Wednesday." Hermes took the hint and backed off.

Hermes rolls a negative question for Audrey and gets, "You and this character played a game recently that went too far. What happened?" He suggests that since Audrey is trying to understand human weirdness, she asked him about how pranks work, and he showed her by pulling a prank on M. Savoie, their French teacher. He took the pin out of his fancy rolling chair, so it dropped to its lowest position when he sat in it. Unfortunately, he was drinking coffee at that moment and splashed it all over himself...and someone in class ratted Hermes out.

Audrey rolls a positive question for Chi and gets, "You and this character both have suspicions about one of the teachers at your school. What do you think they might be up to?" She says that Mr. Loux, their chemistry teacher,

is a genius, which most of the kids at school just assume is a normal level of genius. But Audrey recognizes it for something more. Chi offers that he doesn't see that it's beyond human but just has a weird feeling about him. Audrey says that she's talked around her suspicions with Chi, of course not wanting to reveal that she thinks Mr. Loux is an alien.

Chi rolls for River and gets, "What tremendous act of bravery did you recently see this character do?" He says that River stood up to a group of seniors picking on a sophomore during lunch—despite the fact that there were three of them *and* that they're all varsity athletes. It looked like there might be some punches thrown, and Chi was about to jump in when a teacher noticed and defused the situation. River suggests that it could have been Mr. Loux who stepped in, and the other players nod enthusiastically.

## ONE EACH EXAMPLE

In addition to the above answers, River rolls a positive question for Chi and gets, "What superhero or celebrity are you and this character both obsessed with?" They say they both like a hero from the previous cycle, Groove Rider, a superhero who can teleport using soundwaves. River likes the work she did to help stabilize geopolitical tensions in Southeast Asia. Chi says it's just that he thinks she's really hot.

River then rolls a question for Audrey using the "Character You Don't Know" questions and gets, "You cracked a joke about a public figure recently. How did this character's response surprise you?" They say that they drew a cartoon for the school paper about Police Chief Murdoch's rumored theft of money from the kids he arrested a month ago. In the cartoon, they had him using the money to buy a toy gun. It wasn't a good editorial cartoon, but River was on a deadline. Audrey surprised them by asking a lot of questions about gun culture—and not getting the joke.

Hermes rolls for Chi, who he doesn't know well, and gets, "There's a rumor around the school about how this character keeps their grades up. Why are you seeking out more about this rumor?" He says that there's a rumor that Chi pays other people to do his homework for him, which sounds amazing to Hermes since less homework would mean more time to work on his art. So, he's trying to find out whose services he can employ to make that happen. Chi says that it's not in keeping with his character to do that, and Hermes agrees that the rumor is totally false, but it could create some great moments in roleplaying with Hermes awkwardly asking about it without tipping his hand or seeming accusatory. Chi agrees.

Hermes rolls a positive question for River and gets, "What team or club are you both part of at school?" He says that he doesn't do many clubs at all but says there's an art club at the school they're both in. They do very different kinds of art, with Hermes doing really abstract things, while River

says that they do much more accessible stuff, like the editorial cartoons in the school paper.

Audrey rolls a negative question for Hermes and gets, "Since elementary school, you and this character have had a rivalry. How did it start?" She points out that she only moved into the town a few years ago, so she rerolls and gets, "What secret are you keeping from this character, and who would be devastated if they found out?" She says that M. Savoie confronted her about the prank since she seemed least surprised. She, uncharacteristically, panicked and turned Hermes in. She says he'd be upset because he seems to have thought that showing her the prank was building a bridge between them.

Audrey rolls a "Character You Don't Know" question for River and gets, "Why did you confront this relative stranger about the strange location you recently saw them leaving?" Audrey says that her parents sent her out to check to make sure their ship was still securely hidden in the forest and found River exploring nearby. She asked her questions about what she was doing there and tried to sound casual. However, she thinks River may have noticed her nonchalance was an act.

Chi rolls a negative question for Audrey and gets, "During a recent field trip, this character got both of you in serious trouble. What would they have to do to make it up to you?" Chi suggests that Audrey and Chi were buddies on a recent trip to the movies with their English class, but Audrey grew bored with the movie and left. When she didn't return from the "bathroom" after half an hour, their teacher made him go find her, and when he couldn't, they both got detention for vanishing. Audrey could make it up to him by explaining exactly where she went.

Chi rolls a "Character You Don't Know" question for Hermes and gets, "You and this character share a friend. What did they recently do for that mutual friend that impressed you?" Chi says their mutual friend is Nikora, and when she complimented one of Hermes' recent paintings, he gave it to her. When Chi was over, he saw it and was impressed by it. Chi says he thinks this would play nicely into Hermes's desire to have his artistic gifts recognized.

## COMPLETE EXAMPLE

In addition to the responses in the previous two examples, Hermes rolls a positive question for Audrey and gets, "What part of this character's personality do you realize is exceptional that they do not?" He says that Audrey has no idea how exceptional her inquisitiveness is, but it's what attracted him to her back when he was attracted to her.

Hermes rolls a negative question about River and gets, "You recently discovered something strange in town and wanted to explore it, but this character stopped you. Why do you still resent them for that?" Hermes found evidence of the hidden ship in the forest while doing still-life sketches

for class. He has no idea what it is; all he knows is that it's a weird object he's never seen. River dismissed the object as a rock formation, and the teacher agreed. Now, Hermes isn't going to explore anymore, so his eye for detail isn't further critiqued.

Audrey rolls a positive question for Hermes and gets, "You're struggling with something at school, either academically or socially. How is this character trying to help you?" Audrey says that to try to understand humans, she's in an art elective. While she can reproduce still life very well, her teacher has told her she needs to show more imagination in her work—and asked one of her star pupils, Hermes, to tutor her.

Audrey rolls a negative question for Chi and gets, "What part of this character's personality scares you? What does that say about you?" She says that Chi's intuition about Mr. Loux makes her concerned that he'll figure out that there's something up with her too.

Chi rolls a positive question for Audrey and gets, "What is your private nickname for this character and why?" He says that, to his friends, he started calling her "Spacey Audrey" after she pulled the disappearing act on the field trip. Only they know it since it's such a recent event, and he's not sure why that nickname feels so right to him.

Chi rolls a negative question for River and gets, "You're struggling with something at school, academically or socially. How is this character unintentionally making it worse?" He says that River often expresses awe that he gets his work done so quickly, which is fueling the rumor that he's paying someone to do his work for him. He doesn't want to confront River about it, though, since he knows they don't mean anything by it—plus it makes him sound paranoid, which he knows he can be.

River rolls a negative question for Chi and gets, "You started a rumor to try to help this character. How did it backfire?" River says they have been trying to start a rumor that Chi is a genius because they figure if people are talking about how smart he is, they won't be talking about the accident. But this is another way they're adding fuel to the rumor since people know that Chi's very bright, but in reality his smarts aren't his strongest trait.

River rolls a negative question for Hermes and gets, "You're sure this character is hiding something from you. How do you feel knowing they're deceiving you?" River suggests that Hermes, who usually shares all of his works in progress with them, has recently stopped doing that and doesn't know why, but they know that Hermes is working on a big project at home. He denies it, though. Hermes agrees that this sounds good and adds that he's still upset about the strange thing he discovered that River dismissed and is hesitant to share any more of his work with her. River says that since Hermes is the artist in the school they most respect, it hurts to feel shut out from his creative process.

*Note: Hermes and Chi don't roll second questions for each other since they don't know each other well. Neither do River and Audrey for the same reason.*

## FINISHING TOUCHES FOR YOUR CHARACTER

Now that you've fleshed out your character and established your relationships with the other characters, you'll add the finishing touches. Many of these will be based on your own choices, but try to weave in some elements from the relationship questions.

**Extracurriculars:** Come up with 3 extracurriculars that your character does. If your character is in school, these could all be clubs or sports through the school, but they don't have to be.

Your **"Forever Extracurricular"** is one you've done for nearly as long as you can remember. This extracurricular represents who your family wants you to be. This doesn't mean that it's not important to you. It might or might not be. But it does mean that it's important to your family.

- It could be an activity that's important to your family—such as football.
- It could also be an activity that represents something important to your family, such as strategic thinking if your Forever Extracurricular is chess.

Your **"Long-Term Extracurricular"** is one that you've done for the past few years, long enough to make it a core part of who you are. This extracurricular represents who you are as a character. This might be important to your family or go against their wishes—but it's central to who *you* really are.

- It could be an activity that represents a skill you've learned, such as if you've been writing for and editing the newspaper for the past three yearst.
- It could be an activity that represents who you are, like the dedication and perseverance that comes from running cross-country.

Your **"Recent Extracurricular"** is one that you've just taken up. It represents who you want to be.

- It could be that you're fully aware of why you're doing this extracurricular now, such as if you recently took a job to help your family pay the bills and to be more responsible after years of being irresponsible.
- It could also be something you're interested in but don't know why, such as joining the theater program because you've seen how close they are to each other and lack similar close friendships in your life, though you haven't realized it.

**Motivation:** Think about what strongly motivates you. It doesn't need to drive all of your actions, but it should propel your biggest decisions. It could be specific (e.g., "find out what happened to my uncle after he vanished two years ago" or "get Salma to go on a date with me") or more general (e.g., "get into a good college" or "look cool"). It could even be about keeping information from other players (e.g., "make sure no one finds out I'm the one who set fire to the school" or "keep my parents from finding out that I've been sneaking out at night").

- If the other characters would know about this motivation, share it with them. Most likely, though, you'll just share this with the GM, and the other players will learn it over time.
- Typically, children are motivated by some kind of curiosity and won't be interested in hiding things—or even aware that they should. Social factors often motivate teens, and they're the most likely group to feel that they have to hide something, either to keep their family from being on their case or to maintain their social standing. Adults will generally only hide big, big secrets (if they have them) but will typically be motivated by either professional and financial obligations or familial bonds.

**Obligation:** Regardless of how easy or difficult your character's life is, they definitely have things they're required to do. For children, that might be as simple as having to go to school and keep their room clean—or they could be solely responsible for caring for their younger siblings overnight when their single father works a double at the factory. Teens are more likely to have obligations to care for others, but there could also be expectations that their family has set for them. Adults almost always have others they need to support and care for. These obligations don't have to be tangible actions, either.

- While these obligations won't have any mechanical impact on the game, they both give the GM something to lean on and allow players to think more carefully about their characters.
- These obligations won't be about being a hero yet. Those obligations will come soon—and will probably conflict with the obligation you're establishing now.

**Weak Point (Optional):** Many heroes have something that hinders their powers or nullifies them completely. If you're using **Weak Points** in the game, think about what they will be. Is there a mineral from an alien planet that you'll learn will stop you from flying? Or do you have a narrative **Weak Point**? Like, are your parents so strict with your curfew that you'll be grounded for a month if you get home at 10:01 pm?

- This might not seem relevant yet, but you'll want to start weaving these narrative elements into the story now. Parents won't suddenly be strict about curfew when you get powers they don't yet know

about. And if there's an alien mineral, the GM will want to lay the groundwork for its existence in the world you're creating together.

- Some players may prefer to discover these as they play, and that's fine! Establishing **Weak Points** during character creation is totally optional.

**Utility Belt:** What items are you never without? Part of what you'll think about here is the objects that you always carry in your pockets or backpack at all times.

- Figuratively speaking, the **Utility Belt** is also a good place to list the advantages you have over others. While this doesn't have to consider all of the ways you are privileged, it would be a good place to think about the more intangible resources you have at your disposal. For example, your **Utility Belt** might indicate that your parents are exceptionally supportive and do everything they can to give you the resources to succeed at school. Or, your **Utility Belt** might indicate that a bad relationship with your parents has given you a strong sense of self-reliance and ability to do for yourself. The intangible resources in your **Utility Belt** won't have a mechanical impact on the game, but they should give you places to turn if you need help in getting out of a problem—or create tension if that resource is suddenly not available.

***NOTE:*** WITH ALL OF THESE FINISHING TOUCHES, IT'S OKAY IF SOME OF YOUR EARLIER QUESTIONS HAVE ESTABLISHED THEM, AND NOT EVERY ELEMENT OF THE FINISHING TOUCHES MIGHT BE APPROPRIATE FOR YOUR CHARACTER. HOWEVER, MAKE SURE THAT YOU'RE ADDING SUBSTANTIAL NEW INFORMATION TO YOUR BACKSTORY THROUGHOUT THESE FINISHING TOUCHES. THEY'LL HELP YOU PLAY A MORE INTERESTING CHARACTER!

Audrey says that her Forever Extracurricular is repairing advanced technology, which her family relies on her to do as part of their mission to Earth. Her Long-Term Extracurricular is volleyball, a sport she picked up as soon as she arrived in Worchester. Her Recent Extracurricular is the Chemistry Club, which she just took up to keep tabs on Mr. Loux. In terms of Motivation, she wants to prove to her family that she's up to this mission. Her older brother keeps suggesting that she isn't, and she wants to prove him wrong. That connects with her Obligation, which is to keep everyone from finding out that she and her family are extraterrestrials. For her Weak Point, she says that her parents don't want her to make friends at school—because friends expect to come over to the house, and they can't have that. Finally, for her Utility Belt, she always has a granola bar with her (an earth food she finds shockingly delicious), a transponder that looks like a key (so that her parents can know where she is at all times), and a small notebook she keeps in her pocket to take notes in her alien language (though her parents have cautioned her against that).

Chi says his Forever Extracurricular is soccer. He's been playing since he was young and is quite good at it. His Long-Term Extracurricular is karate, which he started doing a few years ago to improve his coordination for soccer, but he likes it for its own sake. His Recent Extracurricular isn't through school or a job; it's helping to take care of things at the house for his father. This, he says, is also his Obligation. In terms of his Motivation, he wants to forgive himself for the accident, though Udo points out that his character wouldn't necessarily be aware of this Motivation. His Weak Point is his guilt over what happened to his family and that being in a car makes him incredibly nervous. For his Utility Belt, he always carries his mom's keychain, which has a picture of him with his parents when he was younger.

Hermes's Forever Extracurricular is obvious: his work with art. For his Recent Extracurricular, he says he's started tutoring for art, specifically with Audrey. He says he's not sure what he'd have as a Long-Term Extracurricular since he's almost exclusively focused on his work and growth as an artist, and Chantal agrees that it makes sense for him to skip this one. His Motivation, too, is clear: he wants his gifts recognized. For an Obligation, he says that it seems like it'd be his tutoring, but Chantal tells him to dig a little deeper. He thinks about it and decides that he's obligated to babysit his little brother three days a week when he doesn't have aftercare through school. For his Weak Point, he says that his powers, which he doesn't have yet, won't work if someone can't see them—which includes if they're in complete darkness or if someone closes their eyes. Regarding his Utility Belt, he always has his sketchbook and some sharpened pencils with him, as well as a rotating array of other artistic supplies.

River says that their Recent Extracurricular was discussed earlier: their work with the school newspaper as an editorial cartoonist. Chantal asks for the name of the paper, and River says it's *The Narwhal's Horn*. River's

Forever Extracurricular is their work on repairing cars, which their aunt got them into, and their Long-Term Extracurricular is Scouting, which they got involved with around 6th grade. Chantal points out that all of these were established before and asks for a school-focused Long-Term Extracurricular, and they respond that they joined the peer mentoring program for younger students—which is part of why they were so quick to stand up for the sophomore in the cafeteria the other day. Along those lines, their Obligation is to be an upstanding Narwhal at all times, both in and out of school—or face the disappointment of Dr. Sina, the beloved guidance counselor and leader of the peer mentoring program. For their Motivation, River says they want to open up a garage after high school, just like their aunt from Colorado, who taught them how to take apart an engine and put it back together. For Obligations, River has been working at the local garage with Art, the town's kooky, jazz-loving mechanic. He's close to retirement and is rounding out River's mechanical education so they can take over for him when he retires. River's Weak Point is that their powers, when they get them, can be disrupted by water. Something about how it refracts light and energy interferes with their ability to read body language. For their Utility Belt, they say they drive everywhere and carry a full toolkit for auto repairs in their trunk. They also have a full array of roadmaps in the glove compartment and a few cans of motor oil since you never know when you'll need to top a car off.

# PLAYING THE GAME

## PART 1: STAT CHECKS

Being a superhero isn't all punching, headbutting, or even psionic blasting. In fact, most of what you do *won't* be that. Outside of combat (which we'll address in **"Playing the Game, Part 3: Combat"** on page 57), any time you want to do something that might fail, the GM will have you make a **Stat Check**.

### MAKING A STAT CHECK

To make a **Stat Check**, first, you'll let the GM know what you want to do and tell them the stat you want to use. Then, they'll set a numerical difficulty for the action and tell you what it is. You'll decide if you still want to make that check, and, if you do, you'll roll the appropriate stat die and check the value against the difficulty.

If you roll the maximum value of the die, you get a **Lucky Break**—meaning that you reroll the die and add the maximum value that you rolled the first time to the new roll. You can get multiple **Lucky Breaks** on a single check. For more on these surprising successes, see **"Lucky Breaks"** on page 45.

After you've finished rolling, you and any players whose characters are with you may spend **Adversity Tokens** to increase your result. For details, see **"Adversity Tokens"** on page 44.

Keep in mind that the most you can roll (without a **Lucky Break** or spending **Adversity Tokens**) is 20, and that number is quite unlikely. However, that doesn't mean that the difficulty can't be higher than 20 in cases where a feat seems truly impossible, even for budding superheroes.

| Target Difficulty | Explanation & Examples |
|---|---|
| **21 or greater** | A task that can only be accomplished through a combination of luck and skill—something that even a seasoned hero could hardly do entirely on their own. Seeing someone accomplish something this difficult would be a story told for months, if not longer.<br><br>*Examples: Lifting a car out of a river, holding two power lines together as electricity courses through you.* |
| **18 to 20** | A task at which even an experienced superhero would probably fail—and if they did succeed, they'd be talking about it for at least a week afterward. This is a nearly guaranteed failure.<br><br>*Examples: Dodging bullets without a scratch, decrypting a secret code created by the government in a few.* |
| **15 to 17** | A task where success would be incredible and impressive, even for an experienced hero. This is an almost guaranteed failure unless characters are using one of their best Stat Dice and their Power Die.<br><br>*Examples: Persuading a loyal henchperson to give you the code to the alarm system at the villain's lair, knocking out three henchpeople with a single attack.* |
| **12 to 14** | A task where success is extraordinary—but decidedly possible for a novice superhero skilled in this stat.<br><br>*Examples: Enduring FBI interrogation without giving up the secret identity of any of your fellow heroes, being on foot escaping a pursuer on a motorcycle by using terrain to your advantage.* |
| **9 to 11** | A task where success is impressive—but unsurprising for heroes with serious skills.<br><br>*Examples: Flinging a dining room table across a room to break a window, convincing a somewhat sympathetic teacher to let you leave detention fifteen minutes early.* |
| **6 to 8** | A task where success is almost certain for skilled heroes—but not for ones who aren't.<br><br>*Examples: Deflecting blows from a bully without hurting them, recreating the layout of a crime scene from memory.* |

| | |
|---|---|
| **3 to 5** | A task where success is likely for almost any hero—but not for those who are genuinely unskilled in this stat.<br><br>*Examples: Running an eight-minute mile, passing a basketball to a teammate while guarded.* |
| **1 or 2** | A task where success is nearly guaranteed, except in extreme cases. (Note: If a GM calls for this kind of roll, there should be a good reason for it. Most of the time, "checks" this easy should just be automatic successes.)<br><br>*Examples: Impressing a receptive significant other with flowers, doing a roundhouse kick into a punching bag.* |

## CHOOSING A STAT FOR THE CHECK

One of the most important parts of being a hero is knowing that there are always a few approaches that can solve a problem. If you and the other heroes are trying to talk to a detective about a case they're working, it might seem like you have to sweet talk them (**Charm**). But you *could* always try to convince them that you have the might to take on the perpetrators directly if you can just get their names (**Brawn** or **Fight**). Or, you could try to make inferences about what the detective is and isn't saying (**Brains**).

Just as heroes need to learn to use their powers creatively in combat, you need to learn to use your other skills out of combat to truly succeed. Lean into your best stats and think of creative ways to use them.

When you're not sure what kind of check something will call for, you can always just describe what you're doing and the GM will tell you what stat to use and the difficulty of the check. You can also use the descriptions of the stats in the **"Character Stats"** section on page 26 for descriptions and likely verbs.

## APPLYING YOUR POWER TO A CHECK

When it makes sense to apply your **Power** to a check, you'll roll your **Power Die** in addition to the appropriate **Stat Die**. Your total for the check is the total on the **Stat Die** and on the **Power Die**, plus any relevant bonuses.

When making a check with your **Power Die**, you must always roll the **Power Die**. Even if it is a **Planned Action** and you take half the value of your **Stat Die**, you must always roll the **Power Die**. (See **"Snap Decisions & Planned Actions"** on page 46 for more.)

> ***NOTE*** THAT ANY TIME YOU FAIL A ROLL WHEN USING YOUR POWER, YOU TAKE 1 STRESS (IN ADDITION TO ANY STRESS YOU TAKE IF THERE WAS A RISK ASSOCIATED WITH FAILING THE CHECK ITSELF).

## FAILING A ROLL

It's natural to think that as a hero, you have to succeed at all times. But in *Kids in Capes*, failing a roll isn't all bad. First and foremost, it gives you an **Adversity Token**, which you can use to succeed when you really need it—especially if you pool it with other **Adversity Tokens**—or to activate your character's **Strengths**. **Adversity Tokens** (or ATs) give you more options later on, so sometimes, failing is actually a good thing.

Second, failure can and should push the narrative forward. A failed roll means that what your *character* wants to happen doesn't happen—but that doesn't mean that what happens is bad for the story. For example, if the characters try and fail to convince their parents that they're going out to study, not to fight crime, they might have to sneak out instead. Sneaking out might add exciting tension to the game. Or, if a character can't convince someone to make their costume for free, they might have to do them a favor instead, which could push the narrative forward!

So, while failures won't be what your character wants, they should almost always feel good for the story—and should give the group more directions to take the narrative you're building together.

## ADVERSITY TOKENS

In addition to helping the story move forward in unexpected directions, failing a roll also helps you by giving you an **Adversity Token**. **Adversity Tokens** (or **ATs**) help you in three ways. First, you can use them to improve subsequent rolls. Second, you can use them to activate **Strengths**, some of which require spending **ATs**.

After rolling to try to make a check, you can spend your **ATs** to improve the roll. This improvement can make a failure into a success, make your failure less harmful, or make your success more extreme. In addition, characters in the same scene as a character making a check may spend **ATs** to improve that character's roll. Unless you have a **Strength** that indicates otherwise, each **AT** you spend adds 1 to your roll or the roll of the character you're helping. So, spending 2 ATs would change a rolled 5 to a 7.

If you're spending **ATs** to improve your own roll, explain narratively how previous difficulties have prepared you to face this challenge better. Those previous difficulties don't have to relate to how you earned those **Adversity Tokens**, though they could. If you're spending **ATs** to help a character your character is in a scene with, explain the advice you give them and, collaboratively, explain how that advice saves the day.

Another way to use **AT** is to activate **Strengths**. Many of them have **AT** costs associated with them, requiring that you spend **ATs** to use them. Consult the **Strengths** chart in **Appendix D** on page 141 to see what those costs are.

At the start of the game, every character starts with **3 ATs**, and you'll earn more as you tell your story, so use them frequently!

## LUCKY BREAKS

Every hero has a stroke of luck from time to time, whether that's in a fight or outside of combat. Anytime you roll the highest value on your die, you get a **Lucky Break**! Roll that die again, adding up both rolls to get the total of your check. Each time you roll the highest value, roll the die again and add more to the total. There's no limit to how many **Lucky Breaks** you can get on a check.

In order for a **Lucky Break** to occur, though, the roll must naturally be the highest value. No ATs or other modifiers can cause a **Lucky Break**.

When you're narrating the results of a **Lucky Break**, make sure that your story reflects that you didn't accomplish this all on your own. You got, as the name indicates, lucky. Be sure to discuss how luck played into this check, either in the form of something lucky for you or, if you have an opponent, something unlucky for them. The GM and your fellow players can always help you think of ways to bring luck in.

## OPTION – TIERED CHECKS

It isn't always possible to fail a check; in most cases, if you can't fail, the GM shouldn't call for a roll. However, there might be cases where a few of you are competing to do something better than each other, like having a race or showing off your skills to a crowd of bystanders. Or, you might be trying to see how well you can do something, like searching the web for the best information you can find about a villainous company or rushing to track down a witness as quickly as possible.

GMs, to decide whether to call for a tiered check or not, ask the players if they want to get something specific out of the check or if they just want to see how well they can do something. If they just want to see what they can find in the library's archives about the meteor that crashed two decades ago, that would be a tiered check. On the other hand, if they want to find out the name of the law firm that represented the company that bought the meteor, that would be a standard check. For another example, if they want to see who can complete their part of the cleanup at the site of their most recent skirmish with the villains first, that would be a tiered check. But if one of them wants to clean up fast enough to talk to a cute bystander before they leave, that would be a standard check.

In these cases, the GM can call for a tiered check, where there's no chance of failure and how well you roll will determine what you get out of the check. Because there's no chance of failure, there's no chance of negative consequences, but that also means that there's no chance to earn **ATs** from

a low roll. It's a completely safe check for everyone at the table—other than perhaps some embarrassment if you're competing against another character on your team.

## SNAP DECISIONS & PLANNED ACTIONS

During the course of your adventures, you'll encounter challenges that must be addressed immediately and ones that you can stop and think carefully about. When the GM sets the difficulty of the check, they'll also let you know if the check is a **Snap Decision** or a **Planned Action**. In addition to being narratively different, there are a few mechanical differences between these two as well.

With **Snap Decisions**, narratively, you have to act right away. An immediate problem calls for immediate action, and you don't have time to consider the best approach. For example, if you're in the middle of combat and taking a swing at some henchpeople, or if you're trying to leap from one building to the next while being pursued by evil androids, your check would be a **Snap Decision**.

Mechanically, it means that you choose how you want to address the situation, grab the appropriate stat die, roll it, and then add any relevant modifiers to that roll. If the total is greater than or equal to the value the GM set, you succeed. If it's lower, you fail.

With **Planned Actions**, narratively, you have time to focus and consider the best course of action for what you're about to do. It might be that you're at your base with your whole team, looking over what the villain stole from each site they attacked and trying to figure out what their master plan might be. You have time to reflect. **Planned Actions**, though, aren't limited to mental tasks. If you're preparing to swing from one building to the next and have time to catch your breath, that would be a **Planned Action**, too.

Mechanically, with a **Planned Action**, you may use half of the appropriate **Stat Die**'s value rather than rolling it. Then, add any relevant modifiers. If the total is greater than or equal to the value set by the GM, you succeed. If it's lower, you fail. Also, you may still choose to roll the die instead of taking half of its value, treating it like a **Snap Decision** instead.

When using your **Powers**, you will always roll your **Power Die**, whether the action is a **Snap Decision** or **Planned Action**. You may do a **Planned Action** involving your **Power**, but you can only take half the value of the **Stat Die**. You must always roll the **Power Die** when using it.

Ultimately, it's between you and the GM whether something is a **Planned Action** or a **Snap Decision**. Heroes can try to convince the GM of how they catch their breath for a moment, and GMs should push the players to make sure it makes narrative sense.

## CONSEQUENCES OF CHECKS

One of the first and hardest lessons for young heroes is that things won't always go your way, no matter how hard you try. Success and failure, though, are not binary. The good and bad that comes from your checks depend on how far the roll is from the target set by the GM. Amazing successes bring unexpected benefits, while catastrophic failures can cause unanticipated problems.

Regardless of whether you succeed or fail, every roll should help to tell the story of your group becoming the heroes you'll one day be. Successes will move the story in a direction that both the character and the players want; failures, though, will move the story in a fun direction for the players, but one the characters likely don't want.

When deciding on the consequences of a stat check, GMs should consult the following guide:

| **Target Difficulty** (Roll + Modifier) | **Guidelines for Failure or Success** |
|---|---|
| **+9 or higher** | **The character succeeds smoothly and easily.** Likely, it looks like the character is just showing off or that the task is done so readily that it happens without any effort at all. At the GM's discretion (and certainly not necessarily), there could be some unexpected positive results from a success of this degree. |
| **+5 to +8** | **The character succeeds quite impressively.** At the GM's discretion, the character might have some additional benefits beyond the success, but these will be slight—and only if important for pushing the game forward. |
| **+1 to +4** | **The character succeeds, but not impressively.** Any benefits the character gains above and beyond the success should be quite limited—if present at all. |
| **0** | **The character succeeds, but just barely.** Nothing surprising happens—and the player and the GM should make this success feel as skin-of-the-teeth as possible. |
| **-1 to -4** | **The character fails, but not too badly.** There might be some very, very minor short-term consequences, but these won't shift the story for more than a minute or two. The character has tried and almost succeeded. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **-5 to -8** | **The failure is bad, but not a disaster.** There will be short-term consequences that might lead to some immediate difficulties—but nothing that the character can't handle if they focus on them. The character has tried to do or been forced to do something beyond their capabilities – not surprisingly, they've failed. |
| **-9 to -12** | **The failure is profound.** There will be consequences for this failure, likely in keeping with what would be expected, but the consequences could still be very bad. These consequences may strongly influence the course of the current play session. Generally, though, a character will only find themself failing this badly when they bite off more than they can chew—or because the GM has a reason for them to fail. |
| **-13 or lower** | **The failure is staggering and catastrophic.** There will be both immediate and long-term consequences for this failure, above and beyond what might be expected. These consequences might lead to serious changes in the course of the long-term arc of the story—especially because the characters should only find themselves failing this badly through total recklessness or because the GM has purposefully put them in a staggeringly difficult situation. |

In their first session, Hermes is trying to help Audrey with art during their first day of detention for the prank against M. Savoie. Audrey is trying to explain that she doesn't know what "inspiration" is without seeming too weird about it. Chantal says it sounds like it's time for a check and asks Audrey what her approach will be. Is she planning to try to use her smarts to talk the way a human would, or will she try to be charismatic and talk around the issue? Audrey says she will be charming, so Chantal sets the difficulty at 6. It's not that difficult, but Audrey *could* flub it. She grabs her Charm die (d12) and rolls a Snap Decision, since it's an in-the-moment action. She rolls an 11, getting 5 more than she needs, meaning she succeeds quite impressively.

"Oh yeah," she says. "You know what it's like when you have part of an idea in your head, but you can't flesh it out. Like, you just can't see the whole picture, right? I mean, you probably don't since you're so good at this."

Hermes is flattered and decides to explain what he does when he can't fully envision something, which he says will be a Brains check. Chantal says that trying to explain this concept to Audrey is harder than usual since she's Not of This World and sets the difficulty at 10. But, since Hermes could take time

to think about it, she says it could be Planned Action. He points out that with a d6 in Brains, a 3 would be a guaranteed failure, so he decides to make it a Snap Decision and see what happens. He gets a 2, which is 8 less than what he needs: a bad failure but just shy of being a disaster. He fumbles through the explanation, and Audrey says she nods patiently—but has no idea what he's talking about. In fact, she's starting to question whether he can really help her or not. He takes an Adversity Token for the failure.

Meanwhile, River is back home working on their car, an '87 Chrysler LeBaron. Chantal asks what's wrong with it, and River says it was catching when shifting from 4th to 5th gear. They've got it up and are tinkering with it when Chi walks by on the way to his house. They chat for a bit, and he offers to help hold a pan for River to keep from staining the driveway. This is an easy enough task for Chi that Chantal doesn't call for a check, but she does ask River to make a check to repair the issue with the shifting, setting the difficulty at 8. Because they have the Mechanic Strength, River could spend an AT to succeed automatically, but with a d20 in Brains, they ask if this can be a Planned Action since they're in no rush. Chantal agrees, and River says, "There it is! I hate the potholes in this town..." as they make a small adjustment that a bump jostled loose.

As River wipes off their hands, Chi starts talking about how good River is with cars, then gets quiet. River reads this as him thinking that the accident was his fault and tries to console him about it. Chantal says that this is going to be a tiered check. River knows Chi well enough not to make it worse, but just how reassuring they wind up being will depend on their roll. River grabs their Charm die (d8) and rolls, getting an 8. This is a Lucky Break, meaning they roll again and add the result. They get a 6 on their second roll, so the result is a 14. Chantal says this is a significant success and reminds River and Chi to incorporate some luck into their roleplaying of the conversation.

River talks about how everything takes time: learning, fixing, healing... everything. While this wouldn't necessarily be the most comforting, Chi says that this resonates with something they were talking about in chemistry that day about radioactive decay. "That's like what Loux was saying in Chem today. These awful radioactive elements, they're less and less radioactive. It's a half-life thing. They hurt people less and less. They'll always be radioactive; they can always hurt us, but eventually, they don't hurt as much." River nods, and Chi says, "Thanks. I gotta get home to Dad. You want to come with me?"

# PLAYING THE GAME

## PART 2: GETTING YOUR POWERS

The moment you've all been waiting for, at least as players, is when your powers manifest. Even though you've known about it as a player for quite some time, as a character, this moment will come as a surprise.

In the GM Section, we'll give some advice about how to build up to this moment and make it meaningful (see **"The Inciting Incident"** on page 100), but in this section, we'll talk about what you need to do mechanically when you gain your powers: selecting your **Starting Cape** and **Power Growths** and establishing your secret identity.

In order to keep play moving at the table, you'll do these between sessions. Making mechanical choices can slow things down for the **Starting Capes** and **Power Growths**, and the questions surrounding your secret identity will likely be kept from the other players at the table, at least for now.

## STARTING CAPE AND POWER ABILITIES

To keep track of the mechanics of your **Cape** and **Power**, you'll add a **Cape and Power Tree** sheet to your character sheet . As you progress, you'll add more to this sheet, but at the beginning, you'll get a **Starting Cape Growth** and a **Starting Power Growth**.

### STARTING CAPE ABILITY

**Starting Cape Abilities** are simple Stat check modifiers. There are three possible Stat check modifiers for each **Cape**, and players will choose to get a +1 for one of them.

- **Brawlers:** Brawn, Fight, or Flight;
- **Cryptics:** Brawn, Charm, or Flight;
- **Guardians:** Brains, Charm, or Grit;
- **Shooters:** Brains, Fight, or Grit;
- **Tacticians:** Brains, Charm, or Flight;
- **Tanks:** Brawn, Fight, or Grit;

When selecting this +1 bonus, think about how you'll fulfill your role on the team. If you're a Tank, are you going to take the punches so the rest of your team doesn't have to? If so, a +1 to **Grit** makes sense. Or are you planning to be the best form of defense is a good offense? If so, +1 to **Fight** makes sense. Of course, if you're going to handle your role with your raw physical prowess, a +1 to **Brawn** makes the most sense.

On the **Cape** section of the **Cape and Power Tree** sheet, write in this **Ability**. Now, any time you're working as a team in a situation that calls for heroics, you'll get this bonus. It doesn't apply when you're not superheroing, though.

## STARTING POWER ABILITY

During character creation, you also choose what kind of **Power** you'll have. Now that it has manifested, you'll work with the GM to establish what using that **Power** looks like at first. Think about the **Capstone**, then think about what the first inkling might look like.

For example, if your power is to alter reality into something resembling a surrealist painting, it might first manifest as the ability to see the world from outside of yourself—literally. Or, perhaps, it manifests as the ability to warp inanimate objects to knock them out of enemies' hands. If you're going to be able to control vibrations, your power might first manifest as being able to shake the ground when you stomp your foot—or it might manifest as being able to make your voice boom when you yell. Go with what feels right, and lean into the narrative!

In terms of the way that **Powers** can function mechanically, there are three broad categories of powers that determine how and when they activate:

- **Action Abilities** are used during the Hero's Action phase of combat. They involve what you'll be doing to try to take down the bad guys, and they can be used once per round of combat unless otherwise noted. Using it is the hero's action that turn.
- **Reaction Abilities** are used in response to something a villain does, so they're generally used during the Villain's Actions phase of combat. Typically, these are ways the hero can defend themself or their teammates—or both. When a hero uses a **Reaction Power**, they can still take an action during the Hero's Action phase of combat. Unless otherwise noted, **Reaction Powers** can be used once per turn for free. Each use after that requires the hero using the power to take **1 Stress**.
- **Constant Abilities** are perpetually in place, and they do not require a check to activate. Like **Reaction Power**s, they do not take the hero's action to activate. Generally, these are static bonuses that are always active unless the hero is not present or is incapacitated. They give benefits in specific situations.

To keep track of this choice, you'll write the **Starting Power** you have selected in one of the two Starting spaces on the Power section of the **Cape and Power Tree** sheet.

## YOUR SECRET IDENTITY

Now that you've got powers, you'll need to quickly figure out how to keep them secret. Even if the world around you openly accepts people with superpowers, you're just getting started and want to keep the unwanted attention those powers will bring away, at least for now.

With the GM, answer the following questions:

- Why is it important to keep your powers secret from the world in general, at least for now?
- Who are two or three people in your life (other than the other PCs) who you think are most likely to uncover your secret identity?
- Why is it important that you keep your powers secret from those specific people, at least for now?
- List two people or things that you'll be putting at risk by being a superhero. Why will you be putting them at risk? What would it mean to you if they were harmed or lost?
- What is your alias going to be?

These questions will help you set stakes for yourself and will give the GM hooks to use during play. For more on how your secret identity might impact the narrative, see **"Special Check - Secret Identity"** on page 76.

During their second session, River and Chi are having lunch together with some of River's advisees when one of the senior bullies starts in again on one of the first-years. When River steps in, Chi is on guard, feeling extra defensive of his friend after their conversation in the first session. He sees that the bully is about to swing at River and steps in, getting hit instead. Because of his powers, even though he isn't aware of them yet, the hit doesn't hurt him at all, and he instinctively shoves the bully back, taking the force from the punch and adding to the shove—which makes it look far more violent than he means it to be. When the teacher monitoring the cafeteria sees this, it looks like Chi is the aggressor—and when River stands up forcefully for their friend, it lands both of them in trouble.

This scene helps Chantal set the stage for all four characters to be in the same place to get their powers in after-school detention with Mr. Loux. As they work on some homework, he sets up a lab for the next day, which only takes a few minutes, and then becomes visibly bored. After about half an hour of detention, he says, "Do you four want to see something neat?" Then, with a smile, he shakes an Erlenmeyer flask with an orange, brown-flecked liquid floating in it.

He explains that he can show them a cool reaction, then enthusiastically sets up something under the fume hood. Also bored with their homework, everyone gets involved, and Mr. Loux hands a beaker with the catalyst

to Hermes to pour in and start the reaction. Hermes pours it into the salt mixture in the hood, and crystalline tentacles begin to grow out from the salt. Hermes leans in for a closer look, and Chantal says, "Okay, gang... this is when your powers activate," letting the table know that they should all play into their powers.

She says that as Hermes leans in to look, a few of the crystalline tentacles seem to lunge for him and pull him in. One wraps around his neck while other tentacles wrap around his arms. Sensing that something's wrong a moment before this happens, River rolls to see if they can knock one of the tentacles away from Hermes. Chantal sets the difficulty at 7. They roll a Flight check, since this is a speed reaction, getting a 1 on their Flight die (d6) and a 3 on their Power Die (d4), which they roll since they're using their superhuman reflexes. With a total of 4, they fail by 3, meaning they try but miss it by a hair. Still, everyone notices that River reacted before they noticed anything was happening. They take an AT for failing the roll and take a Stress because they were using their power.

Audrey panics since this is a chemical reaction she wouldn't expect to find on Earth. Without thinking, she blasts the tentacle at Hermes's neck with her energy projection. She says she wants to destroy the tentacle without harming Hermes, so Chantal sets the difficulty at 11. This is a shot that requires some serious skill. She rolls her Fight die (d20) and her Power die (d4), getting a total of 12. She describes how the group sees grey energy swirl for half a second around her left hand before she points her index finger at the tentacle on Hermes's neck and blasts it to smithereens.

Chi explains that he'd like to learn about his power when the reaction explodes, which means he has to push Hermes out of the way. Chantal sets the Brawn check for that at 8, and Chi says he'd rather use Grit. He's trying to tough his way in between Hermes and the crystalline tentacles in order to bear the brunt of the coming explosion. Chantal sets this difficulty at 10, and Chi rolls his Grit die (d20) and Power die (d4). With an 8, he would fail, but he decides to spend 2 ATs to succeed. He narrates how he shoves Hermes to the side, snapping the tentacles free. Chantal says that in response, the tentacles snap back into the hood and the salt starts to spark. Chi says that, on some level, he feels the energy building and throws himself on top of it to shield the others from the blast. With a muffled boom, his shirt is shredded, but his skin is unburned and unbruised. But he feels that the energy he absorbed has to go somewhere, so as he swings a fist down onto the slate lab table behind him, he shatters the slate.

Hermes has scrambled for his sketchbook, needing to get something out as well. As the others in the room catch their breath, he frantically sketches what he saw as the tentacles grabbed him. The page fills with multiple angles: Audrey's glowing index finger, the explosion from under Chi's torso as it went off, and the small movement of the tentacle that River saw that cued them into its movement.

A minute later, when everyone's shock starts to wear off, Mr. Loux walks calmly over to the hood with a dustpan and brushes the remnants of the explosion into it. "Well," he says, emptying the detritus into the classroom garbage, "that was dramatic."

Chantal tells the group that it's now time to set up their Power and Cape Trees. She tells them that they should select a Starting Cape Ability, the static +1 to one of three stats, and a Starting Power Ability—the first way that they'll be able to use their Power in combat.

Chi says that his is pretty straightforward: he'll get a +1 to Grit for his Cape Ability and, with a successful Grit check, will absorb the energy and then redirect it. Chantal pushes him to explain that mechanically a bit more, and he says that when he takes a hit using Grit and succeeds, he'll add however much he succeeds by to his next physical attack. So if he makes his Grit check by 4, he'd get a +4 on his next attack. This is a Reactive Ability, meaning he can only use it once per turn unless he takes additional Stress.

River says their Cape Ability will give them +1 Flight because it's a quick reaction. In terms of using it in combat, they say that they'll have an Action Ability that lets them make a Flight check of 7. If successful, they get +3 to their attacks that round. Chantal says this sounds good.

Audrey's Cape Ability is +1 to Fight, and her Power Ability is an Action: blasting energy from her hands. She suggests that it could give her a bonus to her attack rolls when using it, and Chantal says that a +2 seems reasonable and that this will be a Constant Ability.

Finally, Hermes says that he'll have a +1 to his Charm since he's going to eventually lean into influencing others. His Power Ability will be a Constant Ability that gives him +2 to his efforts to dodge attacks.

Now, they have to set up the narrative elements of their secret identities. Audrey says she has a good sense of hers already. As an alien, she has to keep her powers secret, as knowing that she has them could lead to questions about her true nature. So, she says that she plans to claim that she got her powers during detention, just like the other characters will think they have. She's sure that Mr. Loux, though, knows what's going on, and her parents are already aware of her identity and energy powers. Chantal points out that there need to be people she's trying to keep her powers hidden from, and Audrey asks if it can be slightly different: that she doesn't want her parents to know that anyone else knows she has powers. Chantal agrees that this is a reasonable change. Audrey is putting her family's mission, still undefined for the players, at risk. She'd also be putting Mr. Loux at risk of having his identity discovered...though she's still not sure what exactly that identity is. She decides her superhero identity will be Blast.

Chi's father is his number one concern, and anything he does will have to keep him from finding out that he has powers—or at least from finding out

that he's using them for heroics. Given that his son is his only surviving family member, Chi's dad would worry too much. His dad is also likely to uncover his identity. Nikora, his friend, is likely to uncover it, too, since they've been spending more and more time together, and Chi finds himself wanting to be completely open with her. He'll be putting both of them at risk as well, since he knows that those closest to a hero are a villain's first targets. His alias will be Charge, at least until he thinks of something better.

Hermes says that he doesn't want people to think his artistic skill comes from his powers. Plus, he doesn't want the attention that would come from having powers before he has established himself as an artist. So, he doesn't want anyone to find out about it. He also thinks that Nikora is likely to find out since he's attracted to her. His parents are always supportive of his art, so as his perspective shifts, they're likely to notice changes and ask questions. If they discover his powers, Hermes is worried they will push him to accept his responsibilities as a Hero. He has worked so hard to gain respect as an artist, and he doesn't want to risk what little he's gained. For his alias, he says he'll eventually be called Perspective...after his character stops resisting becoming a hero).

River decides they'll go by Twitch and that their parents and aunt can never know about this power. Like Chi's family, they'd just worry too much. Along the same lines, their family would worry more if the world knew about their power. In Groove Rider's memoir, she talks about the early pressures before the world found out about her. River would be putting her role as a peer mentor at risk if too many people find out. After all, who'd want to be mentored by a freak? Dr. Sina, though, is likely to find out, as are River's parents.

# PLAYING THE GAME

## PART 3: COMBAT

Okay, sometimes being a superhero is about punching, headbutting, and psionic blasts. When all else fails, sometimes you gotta defend those who cannot defend themselves against the bad guy. This section will cover exactly how that will go and how you can make sure you pull off Ultimate Move Number 57—just like the pros.

During combat, you'll try to take out the villains before they take you out. During the fight, you'll make checks as you would outside of combat—but with the purpose of defeating the villains. As the fight goes on, you'll take **Stress**, but you're young. You don't need to worry about that while you're fighting. You can deal with the fallout after.

In order to end combat with a victory, the heroes need to get a specific number of successes. Usually, the GM will notify you of this number ahead of time by setting some **"Clocks"** that are visible to everyone at the table, but they'll always know how many successes you need before combat begins, even if they keep this a secret from the players. Depending on what the villains are trying to do, the GM may have a variety of conditions to end combat, discussed in **"Ending Combat"** on page 69.

The GM and the players should think about narrating combat in *Kids in Capes* like describing a fight scene in a movie or TV show. Keep things moving, keep things as tense as possible, and make sure that, even if the heroes and the villains all miss their attacks, things are still happening every turn.

Combat in *Kids in Capes* uses two terms you need to understand: **Risks** and **Stress**. These are mechanical consequences of the dangers your characters are putting themselves in.

### RISKS IN COMBAT

Risks are inherent in being a superhero. It's risky to use your powers to help you get to school faster, and it's *definitely* risky to try throwing a car at Lord Flame and their minions. **Risks** determine the base level of **Stress** you might take if the check fails, though the greater the success, the less of the **Risk** you suffer—and the greater the failure, the more **Stress** you take. Every check you make in combat should have a **Risk** of at least **1 Stress**.

In addition, environmental factors might contribute to **Risks** as well. If, for example, you're fighting on top of a moving train, you may risk taking **Stress** by trying to keep your footing while travelling over a hundred miles an hour, and you may need to make checks to do so independent of what the villains are doing.

Some **Risks** may even be so great that you'll be taking **Stress** simply for attempting it, regardless of how well you roll. For example, if Lord Flame has

engulfed himself in fire, you'll take **Stress** to try to grab and throw him no matter how well you roll.

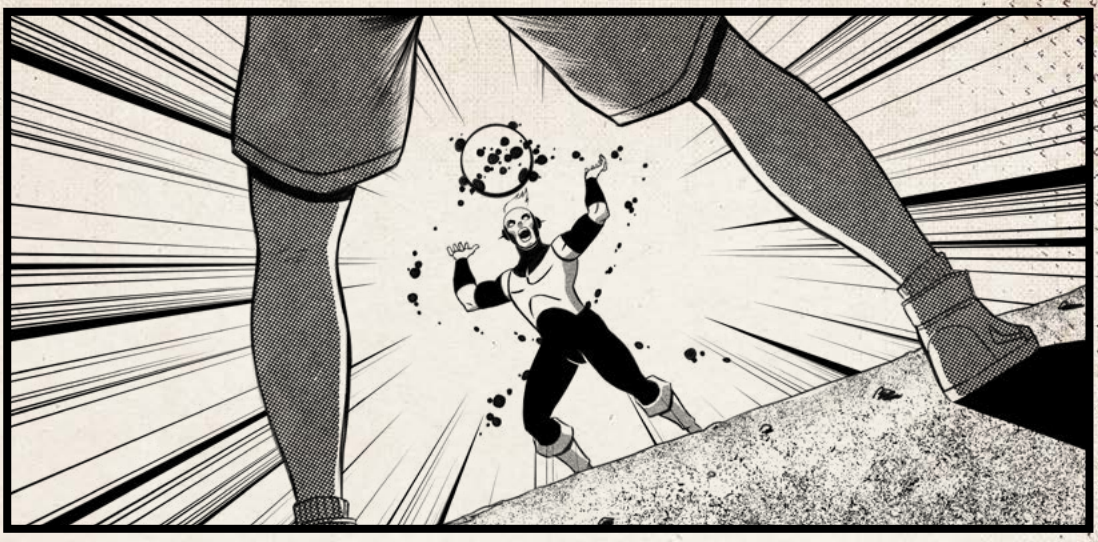
## STRESS DURING COMBAT

During combat, and sometimes in other situations, the GM will tell you that you're risking taking **Stress** in addition to the narrative risk. It could be as you try lifting a car off of an innocent bystander or as you try using your super speed to make it to class on time after sleeping in. And every time you try to do something in combat or use your **Power**, you risk at least **1 Stress**.

During combat, **Stress** affects you in the following ways:

| Accumulated Stress | Narrative | Impact of Accrued Stress During Combat |
|---|---|---|
| **0 to 4** | *"You're doing great, kid!"* | No effect |
| **5 to 7** | *"Everyone gets a little busted up."* | +1 to Stress-Boosted Stat<br>-1 to Stress-Reduced Stat |
| **8 to 9** | *"Roll with those punches."* | +2 to Stress-Boosted Stat<br>-2 to Stress-Reduced Stat |
| **10 to 11** | *"This is a rough one. I remember those."* | +3 to Stress-Boosted Stat<br>-3 to Stress-Reduced Stat<br>+1 on all Power Die rolls |
| **12** | *"What're you still doin' here, kid?"* | +5 to Stress-Boosted Stat<br>-5 to Stress-Reduced Stat<br>+2 on all Power Die rolls |
| **13** | *"Get outta here!"* | You must immediately remove yourself from combat. This could be fleeing the scene, getting thrown too far away to get back, or being knocked out. |

Make sure to narrate these effects of **Stress** as you're narrating your actions in combat. After combat ends, there will be effects of accrued **Stress**, which we'll address in **"Fallout from Stress"** on page 72.



### SEQUENCE OF COMBAT

- STARTING COMBAT
- ELEMENT OF SURPRISE ACTIONS
- VILLAINS' ACTIONS
- HEROES' ACTIONS
- ENDING COMBAT

## STARTING COMBAT

When it seems like a fight will break out, the GM will first ask players, "Are we entering combat?" While the characters may not be aware a fight is about to start, the table should first agree the situation has escalated to the point where a fight is starting.

Going clockwise around the table from the GM, each player will answer "yes" or "no." If players don't agree unanimously to start combat, then the situation does not escalate further. The villain may flee the scene or be willing to hear the heroes out for a time before leaving dramatically—or just maybe the heroes' speech for them to leave the life of villainy gets through, and they lay their arms down for good. But if everyone agrees that you're entering a combat situation, the fight has started.

Also, you may be ready to start the fight when your character is not. It's fine if your character either stays out of the fight or spends the whole brawl shouting, "I don't want to do this!!" But every *player* has to agree to the fight.

Before the fight begins, the players should be clear about what their characters hope to gain from this fight—and have a sense of what they might lose. For example, they might be fighting their way out of a

supervillain's underground lair to escape to the light of day, risking getting thrown back into their prison cells. Or, they might be trying to stop a group of bank robbers from reaching the getaway car outside and risk embarrassing themselves in front of a group of civilians.

The GM might also have some surprises in store based on your success or failure, but if there's the risk of serious bodily injury (or worse) to the heroes or bystanders, the GM should be clear about that at the start of combat. In addition, as you learn more about what's going on, you can always shift what you're hoping to gain and what you're risking.

As the combat begins, the GM will set a few **Clock Dice** to indicate how long the combat will be. Most of the time, they'll make this information public for all of you by putting a die or dice on the table for you all to see. (For more on **Clock Dice**, see **"Using Public Clocks"** on page 115).

In the next session that Chantal runs, the heroes sit across from the high school talking about what happened in detention earlier that day. As they're talking, Hermes sees a group of people dressed in dark clothes break the lock on the front door of the school and slink in. Audrey says that this is the time to test their powers; after all, a group of would-be robbers should be no match for them. Chi immediately agrees, but Hermes and River are more hesitant. Ben and Alex indicate that while their characters are hesitant, they're both very excited, as players, to have their first combat.

Yeva says her character, Audrey, made color-coded masks to hide their identities, which she tosses to them, saying, "Unless you want Principal Grenier asking a lot of questions tomorrow. School's got cameras," she says. Chi throws his mask on, and he and Audrey rush across the street.

River slowly puts theirs on. Hermes hesitates, looking back and forth between the school and the road away from it. "Ugh...I wish I hadn't said anything," he groans as he puts his on and runs after the others. Rather than busting in through the front door, the heroes, knowing the school and the direction the baddies entered, circle around back and slip in through a window, hoping to get the drop on the robbers. They peek through the window on one of the doors to the classroom.

Chantal puts two dice on the table: one visible to the players and one behind her GM screen. She puts a d4 set to 4 in the middle of the table and says, "As you look into the hall, you see a line of robbers. The first four look pretty similar, but the last one is clearly different from the others. Your first clue is that they're floating about one foot off the floor, and your second is that their hands are glowing with a dark red energy. So, what that means is that there are four henchpeople and one supervillain. They move past you in the hallway."

Chi says that he's going to try to sneak into the hall and attack the intruders before they know they're there. "Okay," says Chantal, "are we entering combat?" All of the players around the table agree, and Chantal tells them to roll a Flight or Brains, difficulty 8, to see if they can slip unnoticed into the hall. Combat has begun!

## ELEMENT OF SURPRISE ACTIONS

Sometimes, young heroes get the drop on their foes. The older you get, the better you'll get at it, and taking out a few of the villains before they can act will keep you from getting beaten up as badly.

When narrating how you enter combat, if you can describe how you use your **Powers** to surprise the villains, the GM will give you an action before the villains act. Remember, when using your **Powers**, you're always risking at least **1 Stress**—possibly more if your action puts you or others at risk.

In short, anyone who can explain how they surprise the villains and act first gets a round of **Heroes' Action** before the villains act. During this phase, you can use a **Power** that is an **Action Power**, a **Constant Power**, or both. This does not count toward your use of either of these **Powers** during the **Villains' Actions** or **Heroes' Actions**.

Chi rolls a 6 and has a +1 because of his Cape stat, getting a 7. He decides to spend 1 AT to sneak out successfully. Chantal says she'll wait until the first failure for the Element of Surprise Actions. The first character who fails will tip off the bad guys to their presence. River rolls next, saying they'd like to use their reflexes to move quietly. Chantal points out that that's not a power they've established yet, and because River's powers are very new, this doesn't make sense. So, River just rolls their Brains, a d20, and gets a 9. Audrey goes next and rolls a 3. She doesn't have the ATs to make up for it, so only Chi and River will get to take Element of Surprise Actions.

Chi says he's just going to take a swing at the closest bad guy, which Chantal says is the floating supervillain, which will be a difficulty of 6. Chi hasn't taken a hit yet, so his powers don't apply; so he just rolls his Fight Die, a d8, and gets a 7. As a Teen, though, he gets a +1 to all Fight checks, so his total is 8. That counts as one success against the supervillain, and Chantal secretly ticks down the Clock Die for the supervillain. Chi describes how he slips out of the room and lunges for the villain, bringing an uppercut into their jaw. It certainly gets the villain's attention, but Chantal says it doesn't knock them down...or even get them to stop floating.

River plans to use their powers to try to take out one of the henchpeople, so they roll a Flight check with their Power Die added to see if they'll get a bonus to their attack. They roll their d6 and d4, getting a total of 5, and then they add their bonus for their Cape Stat for a total of 6. They choose not

to spend an AT, so no bonus this round, but they still get their attack. They roll a Fight check, difficulty 6, combining their Fight, Power Die, and the +1 bonus for being a Teen, getting a total of 6. Just made it! River narrates how they rush down the hall and try to sweep the legs out from under one of the others. The janitor must have freshly waxed the floor, though, and River skids into one of the figures they weren't aiming for. Still, they manage to recover just enough to slam their new target's head into a locker, knocking the henchperson unconscious.

Chantal asks Audrey and Hermes how they get out into the hall, and Audrey says, thanks to the wax, she slips out much too literally and skids into the hall face first. Audrey takes an AT. Hermes groans again and slumps into the hall after her.

## VILLAINS' ACTIONS

Unless you surprise them, the villains always act first. The GM should announce what the bad guys are doing, then ask how the heroes respond.

Henchpeople will all act together—though they may target more than one hero. For example, if there are five heroes, all five bank robbers with guns might shoot at one hero each. The GM will announce what they're doing and what happens if they're successful, including any **Risks**. After that, the players announce how they will respond.

Usually, this falls into one of two approaches: taking the hit or trying to dodge. If you try to take the hit, you'll likely be using **Grit** or **Brawn**; you'll definitely take **Stress**, but you're less likely to take as much. If you try to dodge, you'll likely be using **Flight**, **Fight**, or **Brains**. You might manage to take no **Stress**, but you're risking taking more.

However, if you roll well enough on either, you'll have the opportunity to **Counterattack**, getting a bonus attack against the enemy attacking you. This attack can involve using your powers or could be a simple punch to the face.

The GM will first set the difficulty, and then you'll make a check against that number. A success will mitigate harm (in the form of undesirable narrative consequences or **Stress**), and a failure will mean that the harm happens. As with all **Risks**, the greater the failure, the worse the consequences. Generally, the base **Risk** of an enemy's attack will be **2 Stress**.

Consider the following chart for mechanical impacts of your roll when attacking or defending:

| Degree of Success/ Failure | Attacking<br>*any appropriate stat based on how you're attacking* | Defending: Take the Hit<br>*usually Brawn or Grit* | Defending: Dodge the Attack<br>*usually Fight or Flight* |
|---|---|---|---|
| **+13 or more**<br>*"You're almost ready to be a full-time hero!"* | 3 Successes against a villain who requires multiple successes to take down | Avoid the Risk AND Counterattack | The next hero to act in combat gets a +3 on their next check. |
| **+9 to +12**<br>*"Way to prove yourself out there!"* | 2 Successes against a villain who requires multiple successes to take down | Avoid the Risk<br>OR<br>Take 1 Stress AND Counterattack | The next hero to act in combat gets a +1 to their next check. |
| **+5 to +8**<br>*"Good work out there, kid!"* | 1 Success | Avoid the Risk | Avoid the Risk |
| **+1 to +4**<br>*"Well, you got it done."* | 1 Success | Suffer the Risk: 1 Stress | Avoid the Risk |
| **0**<br>*"I guess that works, but that's not how heroes do it."* | 1 Success | Suffer the Risk: 1 Stress | Suffer the Risk: 1 Stress |
| **-1 to -4**<br>*"Can't win 'em all, kid."* | No Successes (Take 1 Stress if using your Power) | Suffer the Risk (Take 1 additional Stress if using your Power) | Suffer the Risk (Take 1 additional Stress if using your Power) |
| **-5 to -8**<br>*"I remember having days like that."* | No Successes and Take 1 Stress (Take 1 additional Stress if using your Power) | Suffer the Risk (Take 1 additional Stress if using your Power) | Suffer the Risk + 1 Stress (Take 1 additional Stress if using your Power) |
| **-9**<br>*"Not everybody's cut out for this, sport."* | No Successes *and* Take 2 Stress (Take 1 additional Stress if using your Power) | Suffer the Risk + 1 Stress (Take 1 additional Stress if using your Power) | Suffer the Risk + 2 Stress (Take 1 additional Stress if using your Power) |

As you decide how to respond, you may use your **Reaction Powers**. Remember, if you want to use them more than once per round, you must take **1 Stress** for each additional use. A round consists of one sequence of the Villains' actions followed by the Heroes' actions. At the conclusion of the Heroes' turn, a new round begins! Make sure to keep track of whether you use a Reaction Power during the Villains' turn; you'll take 1 Stress if you use a Reaction Power again during the Heroes' turn.

In some cases, the GM may announce that, regardless of success or failure, the players will take **Stress**. For example, if the supervillain you're fighting uses psychic attacks that you cannot stop, you might take **Stress** each time they act. Or, if a gargantuan monster is stomping through your beloved city, flying debris may automatically cause you **Stress** with the **Risk** of more if you don't roll well.

Chantal says that it's now time for the villains' actions. She says that the three conscious henchpeople will act first, each targeting a different teen. She says that they draw batons from their sleeves, extend them, and move to attack River, Audrey, and Hermes. Chantal sets the difficulty at 6 for them to defend. They are all risking 1 Stress if they don't succeed.

All three decide to Dodge the Attack and roll their appropriate stats. River goes first and rolls their Fight, a d12. They get an 8 and add one for their Fight bonus as a Teen. Success! They avoid the risk, take no Stress, and narrate how they use their reflexes to sidestep the attack before it can connect.

Audrey rolls and gets a 3 on her Fight die (a d20). Even adding her +1 to Fight for being a Teen, the hit connects with her. Since she fell coming out of the classroom, she narrates how she's an easy target for one of the hench's batons, which hits her torso hard before she can block it with her arms. She takes 1 Stress and gains an AT.

Hermes has a Constant Power that gives him +2 when dodging attacks, so he rolls his Fight to avoid the baton swinging his way. He rolls an 18 on his Flight die, then adds 2 for a total of 20. This is 14 higher than he needed, so the next hero to act, Chi, will get a +3 to his check. Hermes describes how, as the baton comes in, he sees a few different angles and is able to move easily around the attack—so much so that the supervillain, who is about to attack Chi, is momentarily distracted.

The supervillain, though, still targets Chi. Chantal tells him he's risking 2 Stress with the villain's attack. The floating figure claps their glowing hands together, and a wave of dark red energy flies toward Chi. Chi asks Chantal if this is something he can absorb, but Chantal points out that so far, he can only absorb *kinetic* energy, which this isn't. Chi decides to Take the Hit using his Grit. He rolls a 14, then adds the +3 from Hermes' earlier success, for a total of 17—11 more than he needs. This gives him the choice of avoiding the

Risk altogether or taking 1 Stress and getting to counterattack. Chi says he wants to put this villain down, so he takes 1 Stress and rolls an attack. He rolls an 11 on his Fight die, so with his Teen bonus, he gets 12—6 more than he needs. This counts as one more success against the villain, which Chantal takes note of. Chi narrates how rather than trying to move around the energy coming at him, he steps into it, gritting his teeth and feeling it pass through him. The villain is shocked to see anyone take a hit like this, and that momentary distraction is enough for Chi to land a right hook to the floating villain's ribs.

## HEROES' ACTIONS

In *Kids in Capes*, you don't need to act in a prescribed order each turn, and the table can figure out what works best for them, even from round to round. However, to keep combat moving, a good approach is to act in order of your **Flight** stat. The larger your die, the earlier you go. If there are reasons to change that, though, go for it! Two heroes might want to act at the same time despite having different **Flight** dice, and they can. Or, a hero with a smaller **Flight** die might want to set up a combo for a hero with a larger **Flight** die. As long as you're keeping it moving, you're good.

When heroes act, each of you will tell the table what you want to do, including which stat you plan to use for the check and if you will use your **Powers**. You should also announce if you plan to use a **Cape** or **Power Ability** from your Character Sheet. The GM will then set a difficulty for that check.

Making a combat check works much like a typical stat check; you let the GM know what you want to do and if you plan to use your Powers to do it. The GM will set a numerical difficulty for the combat action and tell you the **Risks**. Then you can decide if you still want to follow through.

You might think the only way to fight in this game is by using **Brawn, Fight,** and **Grit**, but that's not the case. Not all superheroes use over-the-top punches to overcome an enemy in battle. As such, you can use any stat as your primary stat in a combat check as long as you can give narrative reasoning for using the stat—just like any other check.

### MULTIPLE SUCCESSES

UNLESS YOU HAVE AN ABILITY THAT ENABLES YOU TO ATTACK MORE THAN ONE TARGET AT ONCE, A SUCCESS WITH AN ATTACK SHOULD MEAN TAKING OUT ONE HENCHPERSON (ANY BAD GUYS WHO AREN'T "SUPER") OR ATTACKING ONE SUPERVILLAIN ONCE. IF THERE IS SOMETHING IN THE SCENE THAT CAN HELP YOU TARGET MULTIPLE HENCHPEOPLE AT ONCE, YOU CAN SUGGEST THIS TO THE GM. FOR EXAMPLE, IF THREE HENCHPEOPLE ARE ON A WALKWAY, YOU MIGHT TRY TO BRING THE WHOLE WALKWAY DOWN TO TAKE OUT THE THREE OF THEM AT ONCE. THE GM WILL MAKE THIS STAT CHECK MORE DIFFICULT THAN AN ATTACK ON A

SINGLE HENCHPERSON, ADDING +6 TO THE DIFFICULTY FOR EACH SINGLE-SUCCESS HENCHPERSON YOU'RE TRYING TO TAKE DOWN.

THE SAME APPLIES TO GETTING A SUCCESS AGAINST AN ENEMY AND CAUSING SOMETHING THAT WILL HAVE A MECHANICAL EFFECT IN THE FUTURE. FOR EXAMPLE, A CHARACTER WITH ICE POWERS MIGHT WANT TO BOTH FREEZE A HENCHPERSON IN PLACE AND MAKE THE GROUND AROUND THE OTHER HENCHPEOPLE HARDER TO KEEP THEIR BALANCE ON. HERE, TOO, THE GM WILL INCREASE THE DIFFICULTY OF THE CHECK. HOWEVER, WHEN YOU JUST WANT TO GET A SUCCESS AND DO SOMETHING NARRATIVELY COOL, THE GM WILL KEEP THE CHECK AT THE STANDARD DIFFICULTY.

AN ATTACK AGAINST A VILLAIN WHO REQUIRES MULTIPLE SUCCESSES THAT SUCCEEDS BY +9 OR MORE RESULTS IN AN ADDITIONAL SUCCESS--OR AN ATTACK THAT SUCCEEDS BY +13 OR MORE COUNTS AS TWO ADDITIONAL SUCCESSES. THIS BENEFIT CAN STACK WITH THE INCREASED DIFFICULTY, RESULTING IN 3 OR 4 SUCCESSES AGAINST THAT SUPERVILLAIN... THOUGH YOU'VE REACHED IMPROBABLY HIGH DIE ROLLS AT THIS POINT.

ATTACKS AGAINST HENCHPEOPLE ONLY TARGET MULTIPLE HENCHPEOPLE IF YOU ANNOUNCE IT AHEAD OF TIME. IF YOU SUCCEED AT AN ATTACK AGAINST A HENCHPERSON BY +9 OR MORE, YOU'VE JUST HIT THAT ONE HENCHPERSON REALLY, REALLY WELL--AND THE GM SHOULD REWARD YOU NARRATIVELY, BUT NOT MECHANICALLY.

As you rack up successes against the villains and henchpeople, the GM will tick down the appropriate **Clock Die**. For a **Clock Die** representing henchpeople, the lower the number, the fewer henchpeople still standing; generally, one success means one less henchperson. For a supervillain, as their **Clock Die** ticks down, it means they're getting closer to losing the fight and either fleeing or being captured.

Also, the action that you're taking will expose you to **Risk**. Throwing a punch by elongating your arm by an extra foot isn't likely to do more than **risk 1 Stress**—but snaking your arm across a hectic brawl to pickpocket the supervillain while your friend distracts them certainly might. If the GM feels that there is a greater **Risk** associated with the action you intend to take, they'll let you know when they tell you the difficulty of your stat check.

Remember, during the **Heroes' Actions**, you may only use one **Action Power**, but you may activate a **Constant Power** as well. If you already used a **Constant Power** during the **Villains' Actions**, you must take **1 Stress** to use the same one during this phase.

Once all of you have acted, two things happen. First, each of you takes **1 Stress**. Even under the best of circumstances, being in combat is stressful! Second, your **Reaction Powers** and **Constant Powers** reset, allowing you to use them once again without taking **Stress**.

## WORKING TOGETHER

> **WORKING TOGETHER IS KEY FOR ANY SUCCESSFUL SUPERHERO TEAM--BUT REMEMBER, YOU'RE STILL LEARNING TO BE A TEAM! IF YOU WANT TO DO SOMETHING TOGETHER WITH YOUR TEAMMATES, YOU'RE CERTAINLY ALLOWED TO TRY. YOUR GM WILL BASE THE DIFFICULTY ON WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO DO ON A CASE-BY-CASE BASIS. HOWEVER, THE MORE YOU WORK AS A TEAM, THE MORE YOU CAN DEVELOP TEAM TACTICS, ALLOWING YOU AND A TEAMMATE TO CREATE A GO-TO MOVE THAT THE TWO OF YOU DO TOGETHER. FOR MORE ON TEAM TACTICS, SEE *"POWER GROWTH - TEAM TACTICS"* ON PAGE 88.**

## OTHER ACTIONS IN COMBAT

Sometimes, fighting the bad guys isn't the only thing you'll want to do. If you're outside the bank and there's a robbery inside, throwing punches where you are won't do much. You'll want to get inside. Or, if you're trying to assess a situation, you might want to make a **Grit** check to use your street smarts to determine if one of the bank robbers is the leader.

*Kids in Capes* doesn't have specific rules for how much movement you can do during your turn. While many games tell you how many feet you can move without forgoing an attack, that's something you'll need to determine with your GM. If there's a fight happening at the other end of your school's football field, you probably can't get there as part of a round of combat. Or, if you want to sneak across a room without being seen to get the drop on an opponent, that's probably all you're doing this round. But if you need to leap across a classroom to throw a punch, you probably can. Use your best judgment and work things out with your GM—and when in doubt, assume that you can move a reasonable distance as part of an attack or other action.

Within reason, you can make other checks during your turn before or after taking a combat action. For example, if you want to make a check to try to figure out a weak point in a foe's armor before using your laser vision, go for it. If you hit your opponent hard but she stays on her feet, you might make a check to see if you can get a sense of what you'd need to do to stop her. Again, there are no hard and fast rules here, but generally speaking, making one check before or after (but not both) an attack or other combat action is allowed. Of course, trying to knock out three armed guards and then carefully crack a safe won't happen in one movement. Again, be reasonable and work it out with the table—and keep combat fast and frantic.

## INITIATIVE?

In many games with combat, players act in a prescribed order. That isn't the case in *Kids in Capes*, where you can act in any order that makes sense, just like in real life. Want to set up a combo for your teammate? You should probably go before them! Want to see what they do and build off of it? Tell them to take the first action!

This can feel chaotic for some players, and if that's the case, feel free to create an "initiative" order to go in. If you need something, we suggest players act based on how big their Flight stat die is. If players are tied, they can roll to see who goes first.

To be clear, we don't think this is necessary, but we've found that some players feel the need for their actions to have a prescribed order.

After the robbers have acted, it's time for the team to take their turn. Audrey says she'd like to go first and try to take down the enemy who hit her with the baton. She clenches her fists, making them glow with grey energy, then points two fingers at the henchperson. Chantal says that the enemies are less surprised now, so they're more ready to defend themselves, meaning the difficulties of checks will now be 8. Audrey rolls her Fight (d20) and Power Die (d4) and gets a total of 10 after including her bonuses for being a Teen and for her Cape Stat. She has succeeded and narrates how her attacker raises the baton for another swing, opening their torso for Audrey to point right at. Both grey blasts hit them in their sternum, sending them flying backwards and landing, unconscious, on the linoleum floor.

River acts next and decides to try to pummel their assailant, too. They attempt a Flight check to use their attack bonus, the power that they selected when their powers activated, and get a combined total of 9 between their d6 for Flight, Power Die, and bonus for their Cape Stat. Due to the way they use their Power in combat, they'll get a +3 bonus on their attack roll. River says they want to make the most of it and try to take out the last two henchpeople at once. Chantal says this will be a difficulty of 14, and River says they're going for it. Unfortunately, they only get a total of 8, which means they fail their roll, missing by 6 and taking 2 Stress. They still earn 1 AT, though, for use on future rolls.

However, Chi points out that he has the Loyal Strength, which lets him give +2 to a teammate per AT that he spends to help them. He has two AT to spare, and River says that they can use 2 of their own AT to make the check a success. Chantal reminds them to narrate how they work together to make this happen. River says that they attempt to kick the enemy closest to them with both feet at the same time, hoping to knock them into the

henchperson near Hermes. The attack works, but their angle is off, and the first henchperson's flying body just misses the other one. Chi says he saw what River was doing out of the corner of his eye and snaps a kick backward, hitting the second henchperson's leg and tipping them into the path. The first henchperson's body slams into his partner, knocking them both to the floor and incapacitating them.

Chi says he's going to use his momentum to try and tackle the floating supervillain, the only foe still standing. He wants to grab them so hard that he pulls them to the ground, hoping to hold them long enough to give Hermes a bonus on his attack. Chantal says that this will be a difficulty of 14, and Chi asks if he can use his energy absorption powers to help, saying that he'll use the force of the landing to empower himself. Chantal says yes, so Chi rolls his Grit and Power Die, getting a 21 and succeeding by 7. Success! He narrates how he spear tackles the floating figure and slams them into the hallway floor. With him being restrained, Hermes will have a +3 bonus to his attack against him.

Finally, Hermes squares up to attack the supervillain, then hesitates. Hermes realizes that fighting isn't really his thing, so he asks Chantal if he can find something to tie up the unconscious henchpeople instead. This way, a teammate can get the bonus for their next attack. Chantal nods, and Hermes rushes into the nearby gym to grab some jump ropes.

Now that all of the heroes have acted, Chantal tells them that they'll be back to the Villains' Actions, but first, all of the heroes have to take a Stress simply because combat is stressful.

## ENDING COMBAT

A fight in *Kids in Capes* might end for one of three reasons: the fight might end in a victory for your heroes, in defeat for your heroes, or because someone calls for the heroes to walk away.

The first two, victory or defeat, will happen based on reaching an end condition that the GM established prior to the combat—though they might not have told you what that condition is. Here are some possibilities:

- **A set number of successes:** Most of the time, you need to accomplish a few specific things to be successful, like taking down the villains in front of you before they take you down. If this is the case, then the GM might tell you that you're trying to achieve a specific number of successes. Generally, GMs should use this approach to indicate your progress through **Clock Dice**.
- **A set number of rounds:** Sometimes, you just need to keep the bad guys busy long enough for something else to happen. Maybe the cops are on their way to the bank, and you just need to keep the villains

occupied. Avoid as much **Stress** and **Pain** as you can while you keep the baddies busy!

- **A number of successes *before* a number of rounds:** Other times, the bad guys are waiting for something, and you have to stop them before it gets there. For example, if the supervillain's henchpeople are trying to deactivate the safety protocols for their boss before she gets there, you'll need to stop them in time.

Of course, other conditions are possible, and GMs will want to keep you on your toes. The GM might want you to take a certain amount of Stress before moving on, or they might be waiting for you to do something very specific. Whatever it is, keep fighting the forces of evil!

## VICTORY OR DEFEAT

If you reach the conditions that the GM established, either publicly or in secret, before combat began, the heroes win! The GM will let you know that the condition has been met and you're victorious. Along with that, you'll likely achieve whatever goal you were after—and perhaps more.

On the other hand, if you don't meet the goal(s) the GM set for you, the heroes suffer defeat. The GM will let you know that the fight's over and explain what happened or didn't happen—or both—as a result of your loss.

Win or lose, the outcome of the fight will move the story forward. A loss might mean a major setback, but it won't be the end of your heroes' adventure.

## "WALK AWAY, TEAM" OR "WALK AWAY, HEROES"

Just as combat only starts if all players and the GM agree to begin it, combat ends as soon as a player or the GM wants it to—such as when all heroes or villains have been removed from combat.

If a player wishes to end combat for any reason, they simply declare, "Walk away, team," and the players and GM will work to bring the fight quickly to a halt. This could be something like the villain escaping, the bridge they're fighting on splits and separates them, or any other contrivance.

Before telling the team that they want to walk away, players may certainly check with the table. However, other players may not veto a call to walk away. If a player calls for the team to walk away, the heroes are considered defeated.

If a player is eliminated from combat due to Stress - or any narrative reasons - they may call "Walk away, team." However, they should, in most cases, not do so. A player should only call for the team to walk away if something in the combat is making them, as a player, uncomfortable and they see no other way to resolve it other than to end the fight entirely. However, a player

being sidelined because they had their character take risks is almost never a good reason.

If the GM wishes to end combat for any reason other than victory or defeat for the heroes, they simply declare, "Walk away, heroes." If they do so, your heroes are considered victorious.

As with starting combat, a player and their character may want two different things. A player may be the one to call for the end of the fight, but the character might really want to crack off one more lightning bolt at the bad guy, and they can fire one in frustration as the fight ends while the bad guy escapes.

> ***NOTE:*** ANY PLAYER OR THE GM MAY USE THE STORYTELLING TOOLS TO ASK ANOTHER PLAYER OR THE GM TO CHANGE WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE FIGHT WITHOUT ENDING THE FIGHT. FOR EXAMPLE, IF A PLAYER FEELS UNCOMFORTABLE BECAUSE OF THE GM'S DESCRIPTIONS OF VIOLENCE, THEY MAY ASK THE GM TO VEIL THEIR DISCUSSION OF THE HARM CAUSED. OR, IF A PLAYER THINKS A CHARACTER IS TAKING THE VIOLENCE TOO FAR, THEY MAY ASK FOR A SCRIPT CHANGE TO GET THE OTHER PLAYER TO REVISE WHAT THEY JUST NARRATED. DOING SO DOES NOT NECESSITATE ENDING COMBAT.

After a few more rounds of combat, the heroes have taken some hits from the mysterious figure's dark red energy blasts, but they've also gotten some good hits on the villain. They've had enough successes to defeat them, but Chantal isn't ready for this villain to be knocked unconscious yet. Instead, she has the mysterious figure say, "I will be expecting this level of resistance next time we come to hunt down the traitor." Then, with a bright flash of light, they, along with their four henchpeople, vanish.

"We're thinking aliens, right?" says Chi. "Because I'm absolutely thinking they were aliens."

"Who's the traitor?" Audrey asks, trying to change the subject. "Who are they after?"

"Do we have to care?" asks Hermes. "I'd be happy not to fight them again. Ever."

## FALLOUT FROM STRESS AFTER COMBAT

However the combat turns out for you, you'll assess the fallout from your **Stress**, which has both narrative and mechanical implications. Refer to the table below:

| Stress at End of Combat | Narrative Impact | Mechanical Impact |
|---|---|---|
| **0 to 4** | You'll need a few moments to recollect yourself, but you'll be fine. You can keep this combat a secret easily since there aren't any lingering effects. | No effect |
| **5 to 7** | You'll be okay tomorrow, but you'll be a bit out of sorts for the rest of the day. It should be a snap to keep the effects of this combat from the people in your life. | -1 penalty to your next Secret Identity check<br><br>+1 to Stress-Boosted Stat<br>-1 to Stress-Reduced Stat |
| **8 to 9** | You'll be okay after a good night's sleep, but the rest of the day will be a blur. You'll need to be careful, but you should be able to hide this from others today, and you'll be fine after that. | -3 penalty to your next Secret Identity check<br><br>+2 to Stress-Boosted Stat<br>-2 to Stress-Reduced Stat |
| **10 to 11** | It will take you some time to recover, and the impacts of this fight will be hard to hide from the people closest to you for the rest of the day. | -5 penalty to your next Secret Identity check<br><br>+3 to Stress-Boosted Stat<br>-3 to Stress-Reduced Stat<br>+1 on all Power Die rolls<br><br>You cannot use ATs to help others |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **12** | You almost broke, and it will be a little while before you're okay. The only way to keep this from the people closest to you is to stay away from them for a few days.<br><br>You will likely need to see a professional to help you with the kind of Stress that you're suffering from this combat. | -8 penalty to your next Secret Identity check<br><br>+5 to Stress-Boosted Stat<br><br>-5 to Stress-Reduced Stat<br><br>+2 on all Power Die rolls<br><br>You cannot use ATs to help others |
| **13** | You're out of the fight and will need to get professional help almost immediately, and you'll still be suffering serious repercussions from this combat.<br><br>It is impossible to keep the effects of this fight from someone you don't want to know your secret identity. | Automatic failure on your next Secret Identity check<br><br>You fail all Stat checks and cannot use ATs to help others |

When thinking about how the **Stress** impacts you, think about how you took **Stress** during the combat. If you took **Stress** from direct, physical attacks, your **Stress** might manifest by injuries and bruises. If you took **Stress** from trying to help your friends, your confidence might be shaken. If you took **Stress** because of the actions of your teammates, you might react negatively to them for some time. It could also be a combination of these, too. Whatever it is, especially for the higher levels of **Stress**, talk through with the GM how the **Stress** impacts you.

Once you apply the above impacts (or carry them forward for the next **Secret Identity check**), reduce your **Stress** by 4. This is the **Stress** that you'll have going forward in the game. Keep in mind that if you have **Stress** even after this reduction, be sure to apply the bonus to your **Stress-Boosted Stat** and the reduction to your **Stress-Reduced Stat**.

## REDUCING STRESS

Of course, getting into and ending a fight isn't the only way to reduce **Stress**. As you accrue more and more Stress, which you'll do more and more of as your fights get more intense and have higher stakes, you'll need other ways to reduce your **Stress** or you won't last long in combat. Some ways to do this include:

- **Sleep:** A good night's sleep is a great way to help yourself feel better. Your body can rest and your mind can dream. Each full night of sleep you get **reduces your Stress by 2**.
- **Extracurriculars:** Doing the things you love can take your mind off of the burdens of being an aspiring hero. When you're able to engage in your extracurriculars for at least two hours in a day, you can **reduce your Stress by 2**. However, this only works **once per day**. After all, there's only so much you can let go in a day.
- **Professional Help:** When things get bad, you might want to seek the help of someone who *really* knows what they're doing. Whose help you need depends on the nature of the **Stress**.
  - If you've seen bad things in fights or accidentally harmed civilians, you might need the help of a therapist who can help you process what you've been through.
  - If you're having trouble balancing the burdens of being a hero and a student, talking with a guidance counselor might be able to help you.
  - If your character is religious, and your powers or what you've seen are making you ask existential questions, you may benefit from the help of a spiritual leader.
  - If you've been badly injured, you might need to get help from a doctor or nurse to stitch you up.
- When you can get appropriate help and spend enough time with them, **reduce your Stress by 4**. Shorter visits and getting help from someone less skilled (like getting stitched up by a friend who has been an EMT for a few months or having an in-depth conversation with a friend whose opinion you trust and who can reassure you) might still reduce some Stress, though less effectively (and at the GM's discretion).

However, the most important thing to remember about this kind of help is that these people will almost certainly ask questions that could compromise your secret identity, and no right-thinking adult is going to encourage a teen to keep being a hero, especially when they see the impact it has on them. Remember, teens don't have the same patient protection laws adults do, so doctors and therapists may be required to reach out to your parents if you repeatedly seek their help.

Two sessions later, Mr. Loux has explained everything to the teens. After taking part in a scientific exchange program with an extraterrestrial species, he uncovered a plan to conquer the planet, starting with Worchester. He managed to escape and conceal his identity, coming to the town to make sure their plan failed. Now, that species has found him, and they're dead set on capturing him. Even Hermes agrees they have to defend their mentor, and they rush to Mr. Loux's classroom just as the aliens reach him.

The mysterious figure is much more prepared this time, and the team finds themselves taking much more Stress during the combat. In the final round, Chi, who takes a lot of the hits for the team, has 9 Stress. This means he has a +2 to his Stress-Boosted Stat, his Brains, and a -2 to his Stress-Reduced Stat, his Flight. The other three heroes have between 5 and 7 Stress, giving them a +1 to their Stress-Boosted Stat and a -1 to their Stress-Reduced Stat. They think they've finally turned the tides of the fight in the fourth round, with only the floating villain and his muscle-bound assistant still standing.

Much to their shock, though, the brawny assistant manages to grab Mr. Loux, and the floating villain says, "Good. We have what we want now." With the same flash, they teleport away, taking Mr. Loux with them.

"And we'll end play there," Chantal says. Everyone immediately reduces their Stress by 4, then shifts to the End-of-Session discussion.

## End-of-Session & Growth

Even superheroes need to take a break. Talking to your teammates when you're not in the heat of battle will help you work as a more cohesive unit when you're facing off against the villains. It's also a time when heroes can train, honing their skills and their tactics with the team.

In the same way, when players finish a session of *Kids in Capes*, they'll want to go through a few steps to make sure they're reflecting over the session they just played and gearing up for the next session. Though you may add any additional check-ins that you decide upon as a group, use the following steps to ensure that everyone's input is heard:

- Optional: Secret Identity Check
- Free talk and decompression
- Stars and Wishes
- Growth

# OPTIONAL: SECRET IDENTITY CHECK

When a young hero dons the mask, it comes with responsibilities, not only of protecting civilians during a bank robbery but also of ensuring that the folks back home are safe. Some do this by adopting a secret identity. Even if you're a hero who doesn't care if others know your real identity, there is always the risk of your personal life and your work life colliding, which can create all sorts of complications.

Once a character has reached the Intermediate stage and picked up at least one **Ability** up from this level, their Secret Identity comes into play. While a character may have a Secret Identity before this, it is not until this stage that their hero name begins to ring out on the streets among evildoers as someone to watch out for—and evildoers are always looking for new ways to trip a hero up.

When a hero has advanced to this point, the GM will call for a roll at the start of every session. In most ways, this is just like a standard stat check. You choose an appropriate stat to keep your identity hidden, the GM sets a difficulty based on how easy or difficult this approach seems, and then you roll and announce your result. The key differences, though, are as follows:

- The GM will not tell you what the difficulty is.
- The effects will not be immediate but will come later in the session.
- Because your success or failure is a secret, you will not receive **ATs** for failing at the time of the roll; instead, you'll earn **ATs** when the complication occurs.
- The GM will use the table below to set the difficulty level.

To set the difficulty for the check, the GM will start with an appropriate base number, determined by how open you are with your identity. The more open you are, either intentionally or accidentally, the more likely it is that you'll have complications, so the higher the base number will be. We recommend a base number between 1 and 10, depending on how likely their approach is to work. Then, the GM will cumulatively add any applicable modifiers from the following list:

- +2 if the heroes recently had a fight in broad daylight;
- +4 if the heroes fought in front of people who know them in their everyday lives but don't yet know their secret identity;
- +8 if players recently had to fight while missing part of whatever disguise they typically use;
- +10 if any player character recently had their secret identity exposed as part of the story's narrative;

If you succeed the check, you're able to keep the two lives as separate as you want them—barring any earlier failed rolls coming back to haunt you. If there are narrative reasons that you want to avoid certain complications, talk those over with your GM ahead of time. Ultimately, whether or not the GM applies the full weight of the failure is up to them; it might not be in the story's best interest.

The greater the failure, the stronger your personal life will impact your heroic life when the GM decides to bring that into play, either in this session or the next. GMs should consult the following table for guidelines and may use a lesser category, or even consider a failure a success, if it makes for a stronger narrative.

| **Target Difficulty** (Roll + Modifier) | **Strongest Potential Interaction** |
|---|---|
| **0 or better** | No interaction between your heroic life and your personal life. |
| **-1 to -5** | Your heroic life almost negatively impacts your personal life.<br>- You rush to make your little brother's dance recital but get there in time.<br>- You sleep through your alarm and almost miss the bus.<br>- The gift you got your significant other for their birthday is damaged when you throw off your backpack to get your costume on. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **-6 to -10** | Your heroic life negatively impacts your personal life, or someone almost discovers your secret identity.<br>~ You miss your brother's dance recital to stop a robbery.<br>~ You sleep through your alarm, but wake up just in time to hide your mask under your pillow as your dad comes in to wake you up.<br>~ You stop a robbery at the store your significant other works at, and they don't take their eyes off of you during the fight. |
| **-11 or worse** | Someone discovers your secret identity.<br>~ Your dad finds your costume on the floor of your room.<br>~ Your significant other hears you say something while in costume and puts it all together.<br>~ A supervillain unmasks you in a fight. |

Of course, for characters whose identities are out in the open, consequences won't involve someone learning you're a superhero. Instead, consequences can relate to people close to you wanting your help based on your powers, creating rather frustrating scheduling conflicts. For example, Art might need your super strength at her garage for a few hours to move some rusted-out cars. Or, your parents might tell you that, no matter what good you're doing for the town, you still have to be home by curfew.

Chantal secretly sets the difficulty of the Secret Identity Check to 4, then adds the appropriate modifiers. The heroes fought in broad daylight (+2) in front of their classmates who know them in everyday life (+4). They managed to get their masks on in time, though, so they don't have to add the +8. Also, nothing in the narrative exposed their identity, so they avoid the +10, too. So, the total difficulty for the check is 10.

Hermes says he will use his Flight to talk around anyone who asks questions about his involvement and rolls an 18. While Ben, Hermes's player, doesn't know what difficulty Chantal set, narratively, this good of a roll means that Hermes, the character, feels pretty confident in having kept his identity secret.

On the other hand, Audrey rolls a 4 on Brains, the Stat she intends to use to keep her identity secret. Yeva, Audrey's player, knows that with the modifiers that Chantal will add, she has likely failed. This means that as a character, Audrey has a pit in her stomach, knowing that she fought in front of her classmates—and that the grey energy she fires from her hands didn't look that much different from the dark red energy the bad guy was using...

Chantal notes that Audrey failed by 6, meaning that in the next session, she has the option to have Audrey's heroic life negatively impact her personal life or to have someone almost discover her secret identity.

Chi rolls using his Grit, explaining that he will just try to tough it out through his injuries. He rolls his d20 for Grit, getting a 1. Because he ended the session with 5 Stress, he subtracts 1 from his roll, netting him a 0. Chantal notes that because he failed by 10, Chi may, like Audrey, have his life negatively impacted by his heroism or have someone close to him almost figure out his identity. Since Udo, Chi's player, knows it's not possible for him to have passed the check regardless of what difficulty it was—and knows that he failed it just about as badly as he possibly could have. Narratively, Udo decides Chi will start the next session absolutely sure that someone must have discovered his identity.

Finally, River decides to use their Brains to explain their way out of any questions. Sure, they were out of the classroom they were supposed to be in when the fight happened, but they were in the bathroom. Sure, one of the combatants was the same height and build as them, but their build is very common. They roll a d20 and get an 11. Alex, River's player, isn't sure what this will mean for the next session. They rolled well enough that they might have convinced everyone, but they didn't roll so well that they're confident no one has questions.

## FREE TALK AND DECOMPRESSION

After a fight, you'll need some time to catch your breath. After a session of *Kids in Capes*, especially an intense one, make sure that everyone has the same opportunity before you go into the rest of the Growth. Stand, stretch, hydrate, talk about something else—do whatever you all need to do to step back from the game before reflecting on it.

Leave time for this part, and don't rush it, even if that means doing the rest of the Growth at a later time.

## STARS AND WISHES

We'll expand on these in the GM's section, but in short, Stars and Wishes are a way to step out of character and plan for future sessions.

Stars are things in the game you loved. You can list scenes, moments, mechanics– anything that helped make the game awesome for you.

Wishes are things you want more of or want to see in the game for next time. These can be emotional beats, scenes, mechanics to use, moments for your character to experience, or themes you'd like to further explore. There are no wrong answers here. Share anything that you'd be excited to see in upcoming sessions.

After everyone takes their break to decompress, Chantal asks the group about their Stars & Wishes. Ben says that his Star was that Mr. Loux got captured. He thinks that's a great next step for the game, especially since after the last session, there were some requests for higher stakes. Saving their mentor is a pretty high set of stakes!

Alex says that they thought that was a Star, too, and adds that they really enjoyed the flow of combat in the session. They think Chantal did a great job keeping things moving and making all of their actions feel different and important.

Udo says he thought the best part of the session was when they had to decide whether to risk their secret identities being exposed in order to fight the extraterrestrials in the school. That was a high-stakes decision for him, especially with Nikora starting to ask Chi questions about where he is when the team is saving the day.

Yeva says that her favorite moment was something Udo's character, Chi, had said earlier when he asked Audrey if he could figure out how to absorb her "cosmic radiation," which she took to mean that Chi was starting to catch on to her true identity. Udo says that was just a slip-up, but Yeva says they should play into that. Maybe Chi did say it, and even if it was a mistake, it's in keeping with Chi realizing things without realizing that he has. Udo thinks this is great and suggests that maybe Audrey could open up to Chi next game, thinking he knows, only to have him be even more confused.

Chantal says that the way they worked together as a team was really great, both during combat and when they needed to come up with excuses to get each other out of class for the combat. She says she's seeing them unite as a team, which is fun to watch.

Moving on to Wishes, Chantal says she hopes they keep going with those group connections, especially in the next session, where there isn't likely to be much combat. Udo agrees with this, saying he hopes that Chi and Audrey can start working together more closely, possibly with a Team Tactic. Yeva agrees, and adds that she'd love for Chi to figure out Audrey's identity soon—in the next few sessions if not the next one.

Ben says that his Wish is that there's some tension within the group as they try to figure out how to get Mr. Loux back. Hermes is often hesitant to get into combat, so he thinks it might be fun for the other heroes to push him on how much he actually wants to help.

Alex is also excited for some tension in the group and says that, in addition, their Wish is more chances to roleplay the group's emotions about what happened at the end of the session. There have been a lot of high-tension moments, and Alex wonders what the characters will be like when there's not an immediate threat.

# GROWTH

By reflecting on the story you told together during that session, you'll advance your character and your team. Narratively, you'll discuss how your team grew—or temporarily grew apart—during that session. Mechanically, you'll decide how your character's skills and powers advance and how your team's tactics improve.

These decisions can occur at the end of the session if you have the time and energy, between sessions if players are knowledgeable enough about the mechanics or can communicate with each other, or at the start of the next session if that's what works best for all players.

## NARRATIVE GROWTH

Before deciding on mechanical changes, talk about how your group has grown narratively. This discussion will better frame the decisions you make about mechanical shifts. For example, your team agrees that your ability to fight villains as a group is getting better because you're improving communication on the battlefield. It would make sense now to add some Team Tactics to advance your group mechanically in that respect.

Ask yourselves the following questions as part of this discussion. Make sure that everyone in the group verbally responds to all of the following questions, even if it's just agreeing with what others have already said:

- In what ways did your character grow during the course of this session?
    - For example, a hero might have a loved one discover their secret identity and agree to help them keep it concealed. Or, a hero might decide that, thanks to a few great rolls, they have more control over their powers than they thought they had before.
- What problems did your character encounter during the course of this session?
    - For example, a bystander could have been injured during a fight, and one hero might be taking it harder than the rest of the group. Or, due to some unlucky rolls, a hero might question their powers.
- In what ways did our group grow together during this session?
    - For example, you might decide that two heroes who were previously frustrated with each other resolved their differences. Or, you might agree that you all learned the importance of covering for each other to conceal your secret identities.
- In what ways did your group grow apart in the course of this session?
    - For example, you might decide that the simmering conflict between two parts of the group exploded and now that there's a rift. Or, you might agree that the recklessness of one teammate keeps putting everyone in danger and that you'll need to reckon with that in the next session.

When deciding what happens with the group, there needs to be enthusiastic agreement between all players, including the GM, about these changes. You can't, for example, have two characters fall in love, especially if the players of those characters aren't interested in that. And you should never put a hero at odds with the group unless everyone is excited about telling that kind of story—especially the player whose character is going to become a pariah for a session or two.

While conflict is an inevitable part of real-world group formation, it can be uncomfortable for players to roleplay. If that's not the story the group wants to tell, don't go there. Just as people can't shoot lasers from their eyes in the real world but definitely can in *Kids in Capes*, teams can form smoothly and without conflict in this game.

If you do want to include conflict in your story, here are some ideas for ways to create interesting disputes. Remember, during your world-building, you discussed these kinds of conflicts and agreed which ones you were excited to include—and which ones you wanted to omit.

- **Change** can lead to friction between teammates. Sometimes, someone gets new powers, or someone who was the bravest teammate suddenly isn't. As two characters become closer friends, that might mean that another character feels pushed aside. Often, these conflicts stem more from the feelings about the changes rather than the changes themselves.
- **Coping strategies** could be at odds within the team. How different people respond to an unsettling event might go against how another wants to move forward. For example, if one hero responds by talking out what happened and another just wants to ignore it and move on, they're bound to create friction for each other. Or, if one hero cracks jokes under pressure, it could seem to their teammates that they aren't taking their responsibilities seriously.
- **Different goals** will almost always cause friction, especially when those goals are incompatible. These can be conflicting long-term goals, like some of the group wanting to keep their identities a secret and others wanting public credit for their heroism. Or, they can be short-term goals, like saving the mayor or keepng the school from burning down.
- **Emotional conflicts** can come up in groups when one character is jealous of another, feels insecure about their place on the team, or any other hard-to-handle emotions. In such conflicts, the tension is almost always within a character. It's rare that another character will intentionally stoke a teammate's emotional conflict.
- **Ethical conflicts** happen when different heroes have different morals. Some heroes, for example, might think that injuring one bystander to take down a villain once and for all is worth it, but others might think that public safety has to be the team's top priority. Or, heroes may

disagree about how aggressively they can handle a villain. Generally, these conflicts will come from tension between a greatest-good-for-greatest-number approach and a hard-and-fast-rules approach, or from tension between different core values.

- **Miscommunication** can happen when members of a group think they understand a plan by fully discussing it and make mistakes as a result. For example, if the team has used a combat technique successfully before, one member might expect to do that again, only to have their team not follow through on it.
- **Past experiences** could lead to conflict within the team. This kind of tension could arise from previous experiences between members of the group, such as if two heroes were rivals before they gained their powers or if one hero feels the other has wronged someone they care about. Or, this kind of tension could stem from one hero's past experiences that they're applying to their teammate, perhaps unfairly. For example, if their experience with jocks has largely been negative, they might bring that to bear in their relationship with a teammate who's a jock—even if their teammate has never wronged them.
- **Personality conflicts** arise when two heroes' temperaments clash. This can be their emotions or their approaches. For example, one hero might want to rush into combat while another wants to be cautious. Or, a hero might want to angrily and quickly confront a foe, while others might want to take a more measured approach.

Because *Kids in Capes* is a game where you tell the story of a group of young heroes becoming a team, all of these sources of conflict should be, for the most part, resolved by the end of your story. As you create various tensions in the group, make sure that you, as the players, are also discussing ways they could be resolved. Your group, including the GM, should work to make those happen—but don't rush the resolution. A tension can simmer for multiple sessions as long as everyone's enjoying it. And a tension that's been present for the whole game resolving in the final session can be very satisfying!

When that tension resolves, it should be a climactic and important moment for everyone involved. These moments should also involve characters growing, not just begrudgingly burying the hatchet.

Chantal now asks the group about their narrative growth during the session, starting with individual growth. Ben says that Hermes cares more about the stakes now, even if the other characters won't know that yet. He cares deeply about Mr. Loux and is very upset that he was taken. That's character growth for him. Yeva says she doesn't feel like Audrey grew much this session but thinks she will in the next session in her conversations with Chi—if she gets to have those. Alex agrees that River didn't change much as a character or with their powers either. Udo says that he thinks Chi is getting a bit more confident in taking hits for the team – maybe even too confident.

The problems they encountered are obvious on the surface: they all lost their mentor, at least for now. Plus, they fought in front of their school, which makes them all nervous about their secret identities being found out. Sure, they were all masked and remembered to use code names and speak differently, but that only goes so far...

Chantal says it seemed, like she said earlier, that they started using teamwork more this session, which is one way she sees them growing together as a team. The table agrees, and Alex adds that they also have a very clear, very shared goal of getting their mentor back now. Even if the characters don't know it yet, the players know they're all unified in a clear, concrete goal. Chantal smiles and says she has a lot to work with.

Finally, they talk about how they grew apart. For the most part, they agree that this was them coming together, but Udo points out that the seeds are there for conflict. Audrey is nervous about what Chi knows. Chi is getting cocky about his ability to take a hit. Hermes keeps saying he doesn't really want to fight. So, they agree that the next session might see more conflict brewing, and they're all excited about that.

## MECHANICAL GROWTH

Once you've established narrative growth, decide how to reflect that narrative growth within the rules of the game. The heroes narratively coming together likely means that the team will progress mechanically in a way that reflects that. A hero who realizes something about their role on the team during the session will likely move along their **Cape's Skill Tree** rather than their **Power's Skill Tree**. To reflect that, you'll spend **Growth Points** either on the team or on yourself.

At the end of each session, the GM will let you know how many **Growth Points** you have to spend before the next session, if any at all. If you're playing shorter sessions, **Growth Points** might be given out every few sessions, or if you're playing longer sessions, you might earn multiple **Growth Points** each session. Based on the pacing of the game and the number of sessions you plan to have, your GM will decide what works best for your group.

When you spend your **Growth Point** on your character, you'll be advancing one of your **Skill Trees**—either your **Cape Skill Tree** or your **Power Skill Tree**, by selecting an **Ability**.

On both Trees, **Abilities** have four tiers: Starting, Intermediate, Advanced, and Capstone.

- Each **Cape** and **Power Skill Tree** has **2 Starting Abilities**. These Abilities have no prerequisites. You unlock one when you select your **Cape** and your **Power**.

- Next, there are **4 Intermediate Abilities** for each **Cape** and each **Power**. These require you to fill in the **Starting Ability** that they stem from (indicated by arrows on the **Skill Tree**) in order to unlock them with a **Growth Point**.
- Each **Cape** and each **Power** has **2 Advanced Abilities**. To spend a **Growth Point** to unlock an **Advanced Ability**, you must have completed both **Intermediate Abilities** that lead into it, as indicated by the arrows on the **Skill Tree**.
- Finally, each combination of **Cape** and **Power** has a **Capstone**, which represents your hero fully understanding and embracing both their place on the team and their superpower. To spend a **Growth Point** to unlock a **Capstone**, you must have already completed *both* **Advanced Abilities** that merge into it, as indicated by the arrows on the **Skill Tree**.

As you spend **Growth Points** to develop your **Cape** and **Power**, write these skills into your **Cape Tree** and **Power Tree**. Templates for these Trees can be found in "**Appendix K - Skill Trees"** on page 158.

When advancing your Skill Tree, make sure that you narratively explain both of the following questions. After each question, there are some examples of possible responses, but come up with the ones that make the most sense for you, and the more fleshed out your answers are, the better!

- How did you gain this Ability?
  - "Thinking about the last fight we had, I realized that I could probably do this thing. Seems like I can!"
  - "The way I've gotten all of my powers: training."
  - "I finally figured out how to get the nanotech to repulse, so flight's a real option right now! Well, you know, for about five seconds at a time..."
  - "The more I use my powers, the stronger they become."
- How does the Ability manifest narratively?
  - "The arrows I'm using are denser now, so they pack a bigger punch."
  - "My flames burn hotter now, so they hurt more when they connect."
  - "When I transform, I'm bigger now, and that means more raw strength."
  - "I'm able to control air currents so precisely now that I can fly."

## CAPE GROWTH - CAPE SKILLS

The **Cape Skills**, listed in **"Appendix I - Cape Skills"** on page 147, represent ways you can fulfill your role on the team, particularly when facing off

against villains. The skills are recommended for specific **Capes**, but if there's one that makes sense narratively for your character, at your GM's discretion, you could take one recommended for a different **Cape**.

**Cape Skills** have different abilities at Starting, Intermediate, and Advanced, getting more and more powerful the higher the level. If you want to spend a **Growth Point** to take a **Cape Skill** at a higher level than you already have, remove the lower-level **Cape Skill** from your sheet and select a new one from that level. For example, if you have Shake It Off at the Beginner level and want to take it at Intermediate, write Shake It Off in Intermediate, erase it from Beginner, and select a new Beginner Cape Skill. This new Beginner Cape Skill does not cost any additional **Growth Points** as it is covered by advancing the previous **Ability** to the higher level. You may not have multiples of the same **Cape Skill**.

As you choose these, think about the **Capstone** you decided upon during character creation. Reflect on how these **Cape Skills** could build toward that progress. Remember, if you want a **Cape Skill** that isn't in **"Appendix I - Cape Skills,"** talk with your GM. At their discretion, you could work with them to create one. Just make sure that it's appropriately powered for its level.

## CAPE GROWTH - STAT BONUSES

The other way to grow into your **Cape** is by boosting stats associated with it, or its **Cape Stat**. These are the **Stats** that will benefit them the most given their role on the team.

- **Brawlers:** Brawn, Fight, and Flight;
- **Guardians:** Brains, Charm, and Grit;
- **Cryptic:** Brawn, Charm, and Flight;
- **Shooters:** Brains, Fight, and Grit;
- **Tacticians:** Brains, Charm, and Flight;
- **Tanks:** Brawn, Fight, and Grit;

Remember, a boost to a skill when using your powers could manifest in many ways narratively, even for the same type of **Power**, without being different mechanically. For example, a +1 to **Fight** for someone who blasts energy from their hands could come from more forceful blasts, more precise strikes, improved training on where to aim at opponents, or any other narrative reason that makes sense to you. Play into who your character is when deciding on the narrative aspects of your **Abilities**.

You cannot boost the same **Stat** twice, but if you want to increase an existing bonus, you can. When you do, replace the lower bonus with another **Cape Stat**. For example, if a Cryptic has a +1 to **Brawn** and decides to increase that to +2 with a later **Growth Point**, they would choose between **Charm** and **Flight** for a +1 bonus.

## POWER GROWTH – POWER DIE INCREASES

One way to grow your **Power** is by increasing your **Power Die**. For the most part, you increase the size of the die. For example, if your **Power Die** is a **d4**, you can spend a **Growth Point** to permanently increase it to a **d6**. The one exception to this occurs at the Intermediate level when you increase a **d8 Power Die** to a **d8+1**, meaning you add a **+1** to your **d8 Power Die** roll. Remember, even with this +1 modifier, only a natural 8 counts as a **Lucky Break**.

Narratively, increasing the size of the **Power Die** represents increasing the raw power of your character. You might get a bigger result, but you might not.

The largest **Power Die** you can have is a **d12**.

## POWER GROWTH – ADDITIONAL WAYS TO USE YOUR POWERS

The final way to spend **Growth Points** is to make doing cool things easier, especially in combat. Because the ways that **Powers** manifest vary so widely and wildly, you'll work with the GM to come up with appropriate entries for this part of the **Power Skill Tree**.

One suggestion for coming up with ideas for this, though, is choosing something that you're already doing during combat and want to be able to do more easily. For example, if you frequently make a more difficult check to teleport objects out of enemies' hands, you might add that to the chart. Once you have an ability in this part of the **Power Skill Tree**, it's assumed that you're making a check at standard difficulty to do it. It's something that you've practiced so much that you've gotten *really* good at it.

Another suggestion is to think about how to progress your Power toward your vision of your Capstone. What can't you do yet that will get you closer to your signature ability? Add something to move you in that direction!

## POWER GROWTH – TEAM TACTICS

Once your team has been working together for a few sessions, you may discover ways for two of you to fight together, combining your powers to make them greater than the sum of their parts.

Starting at the Intermediate level, you and another player can agree that your characters have figured out how to work together, usually during combat. You each spend a **Growth Point** to unlock this ability.

Once you've done this, both characters can agree to act together. During combat, your characters each agree to use your **Team Tactic**. Then, you'll both make a check to see if they're successful at their attempt.

- If both are successful, you'll gain the benefits you would have gained if you acted independently. Usually, this would have been one success against a Villain. But, because you're working together, your actions are greater than the sum of their parts, and you earn an additional benefit. Usually, this is an additional success, but it could be an ongoing mechanical effect.
- If either character fails their check, both of you act as though you've failed their check. **Team Tactics** are an all-or-nothing risk.

Narrate what happens with your checks, and, especially if your **Team Tactic** works, make it exciting! These should be big moments in combat, and the first time you use it in combat will usually be the first time that the *characters* realize they can do this action together. Make the first time your characters do a **Team Tactic** a *really* big moment!

You can have up to two **Team Tactics**, and each **Team Tactic** is with just one other character. As inexperienced heroes, you haven't figured out all the ways that you're better together with your teammates yet.

For example, if one character is a close-up fighter and one character has tremendous strength, a good **Team Tactic** for the two might be the strong character flinging the fighter at an enemy. The strong character would make a check to throw their teammate, and the close-up fighter would make a check to attack the target.

If both checks are successful, they'd likely earn 3 successes: 1 for the intimidation factor of facing a hero strong enough to throw a teammate accurately, 1 for the attack on the target, and a bonus 1 for the close-up fighter using the momentum to hit harder.

On the other hand, if the strong character fails their check, the fighter won't be thrown accurately enough to hit their target, no matter how good their attack roll is. Or, if the close-up fighter fails their check, they flub the attack regardless of how well they're thrown at the enemy.

Mechanically, if both succeed, it means that one hero gets a success against the Villain for, say, demoralizing them by freezing them in place with her ice powers, and the close-up fighter gets a success for their t-bone attack. Since both acted together, they get an additional success for a total of 3 Successes against the Villain.

Udo starts out by saying he'd be really interested in Chi developing a Team Tactic with Audrey. She can project energy. He can absorb energy. Seems like a perfect combo. Chantal points out that, so far, it's just physical attacks he can absorb, but Yeva agrees that that seems cool. She points out it could even come out of their conversation about Audrey's true identity. Chantal agrees, and Chi and Audrey spend their Growth Point to get a Team Tactic together. Mechanically, Yeva suggests that she could spend her action to

"charge" Chi's hits, giving him an additional success if he hits with his next attack, and Udo and Chantal agree.

Ben says he wants to improve his character Hermes' Cape Ability, Illusion. He currently has it as a Starting Ability and would like to shift it to an Intermediate Ability. This means that, when using this Cape Ability, his Brains check will shift from a difficulty of 12 to a difficulty of 9, making him harder to hit. It also means that a Starting Ability becomes available to him, and he chooses Dimensional Step. This means that he'll be able to teleport up to 5 feet, which he wants to do so he can start playing with his reality-bending powers.

Alex says that River is going to be boring this time around and boost their Cape Stat. They still don't feel like they're using River's powers to their full potential, so they want to focus on using what they have there already. Currently, River has +1 Flight, but they're going to up that to +2. Because of this shift, they have a +1 to give to one of their other Cape Stats, Brawn or Fight. They choose Fight to get the +1 bonus.

## CAPSTONE

The final **Growth** that a hero can get is their **Capstone**, a unique and powerful fusion that represents the hero gaining a complete understanding of both their powers and their role on the team. To that end, your **Capstone** is a combination of your **Cape** and your **Power**, both narratively and mechanically, that you'll work out with your GM. Since this final **Ability** represents your character becoming who they are as a hero on this team, they're special in two ways.

First, rather than choose from a pre-generated list of options as you do for most of the other **Abilities**, you and the GM will both agree on what your **Capstone** is. Like some of the **Power Abilities**, the form it takes is up to you. Unlike those other **Abilities**, though, the mechanical impact is also up to you! Talk with the GM about what makes sense.

Second, you'll only play one session (or short arc) after you unlock your **Capstone**. *Kids in Capes* is the story of your characters learning to become heroes, and the **Capstone** represents them actually learning how to do that. Because the **Capstone** ends your journey in *Kids in Capes*, you'll need to discuss with the group when it makes sense to unlock that **Ability**. Chances are, you'll want to end your stories together.

## EXAMPLES OF CAPSTONE POWERS

### BRAWLERS

- Diamond Strike is a normal person with no superhuman powers. She fights with an advanced form of martial arts that requires peak physical conditioning, so her player chooses Body Control for her Power. For her **Brawler** abilities, she takes a broad selection of abilities to further represent her martial arts skills. For her **Capstone**, she works with the GM to create an ability that allows her a greater ability to smash down walls, doors, and to break objects. This ability gives Diamond Strike a +6 to her roll to do this.
- Grandmaster Zap has Energy Control Powers that focus on electricity. The **Brawler Cape abilities** he selects focus on incapacitating or restraining his foes. For his **Capstone** he and his GM create an ability that allows him to fire his electricity over an area and stun multiple foes for one round of combat (the foes do not get to act) as long as the ground is conductive.

### CRYPTICS

- Hotwire has Matter Control powers that enable her to bring inanimate objects to life, which she initially focuses on toys. As she develops her powers, she can do more complex things with larger and larger objects. For her **Capstone**, she learns to live up to her name by being able to take full control of one vehicle at a time.
- Sleeper can invade the dreams of others for limited times using Mental Control as their **Power**. So far, they have always just been an observer while others are sleeping. For their **Capstone**, the GM and the player agree they can now invade dreams in a looser metaphysical sense, along with the ability to alter these dreams and interact beyond just being a passenger.

### GUARDIANS

- Mindsight selects Mental Control for his powers and uses them to read foes' surface thoughts and predict their actions, as well as to create force fields with the power of his mind. For his **Cape** abilities, he focuses on the shielding abilities to cover the forcefield aspect of his character's Mental Control powers. For his **Capstone**, he can create a shield around himself and his entire team that will last as long as he maintains concentration.
- Senorita de la Muerte's player decides her character can speak with the dead, granting her wisdom beyond her years. As such, she chooses the Companions Power option—the spirits of the dead being her companions, and focuses on the healing aspects of her **Cape** abilities. With her GM's permission, she decides that her **Capstone** ability allows her to prevent a person or animal who is fatally wounded from dying if she is present and can touch them.

### SHOOTERS

- Blazer moves so fast that they generate fire whenever they act, so they decide to select the Travel Power set. In addition to travel-focused abilities, their player decides that Blazer is immune to their own fire and can throw it at enemies, so they use one of their **Growth** slots on that ability. Their **Cape** abilities focus on increasing the power of their attacks in combat. For their **Capstone** ability, Blazer generates a fire tornado that hits a ten-foot radius area with a powerful fire attack. Mechanically, it adds +4 to **Fight** when they use this ability.
- Vector has Body Control because his powers allow his arms and fingers to stretch out and strike opponents faster than most people can see. As a **Shooter**, his player focuses on abilities that allow Vector to hit multiple targets in combat. For his **Capstone**, Vector works with his GM to create the ability to stretch the core of his body with his arms spread, which allows him to "clothesline" multiple opponents and knock them to the ground with a single successful attack roll.

### TACTICIANS

- Kid Widget's player decides that his character is a mechanical genius who can build devices on the fly to help his team in battles. He chooses Objects to give his character the abilities to manifest these objects. For his **Cape Powers**, he chooses the ones that directly aid his teammates. For his **Capstone**, his player decides to have an ability that allows him to use his objects to link his teammates. Working with the GM, this ability allows him to let all of the team members add to one character's roll whether they are near each other or not (although they all have to be in the same scene). They do not have to spend any **ATs** to add to the roll.
- The Snipe is a regular person who is exceptionally stealthy. She chooses Stealth for her Powers and uses her abilities to hide in shadows or create masterful disguises. She selects **Cape** abilities that help her teammates, but focuses on the ones that allow them to exploit their opponent's weaknesses and perform better when acting in combat or under pressure. Her **Capstone** allows her to sneak behind an opponent in combat and even further magnify that opponent's weakness, allowing another teammate to make an automatic 13+ success against that opponent.

### TANKS

- El Toro has the Travel power set, which allows his character to charge through any obstacles on the battlefield, including opponents. His player focuses on **Cape** abilities that heal him so he will be the last hero standing in any combat. His **Capstone** allows him to spend one round of combat to clear all **Stress** that his character has suffered in that combat.

- Ms. Matter has the ability to transform herself into any matter she touches. Her player leans heavily into the **Cape** abilities that allow her to take damage for and divert attacks from other team members. She uses Body Control to create the abilities that further enhance her ability to mimic materials she comes into contact with. For her **Capstone**, her player works with the GM to create an ability that allows her to transfer her current skin composition to willing teammates in order to grant them temporary resilience to attacks.

When the heroes are ready to unlock their Capstones, Alex decides that River will be able to read body language *so well* that, before the fight, they can know what the villains' moves will be. This will give them a constant +6 when attacking. In addition, with a Brains check of 10, River can predict enemies' most likely attacks based only on their body language before combat; if River can taunt their enemies, they throw these enemies off their game and give all the heroes a +3 to defense checks for the whole fight.

Yeva is still happy with the idea of Audrey using her energy as a kind of telekinesis by wrapping objects in her signature grey energy. She can use this to give herself +6 on all of her own attack checks that round, and, if her last attack is successful, it gives a +6 to a teammate's next attack against the same enemy.

Udo, too, still likes the original idea he had for Chi. If the energy that has "charged" him isn't just kinetic energy, he can project energy back at the enemies. On a successful attack, he can make an attack against a second, nearby enemy at +6 difficulty. If that second attack is successful, he hits the first enemy so hard that the energy chains to the second and harms them as well.

Ben has really enjoyed using Hermes to support his teammates rather than doing attacks himself. So, he shifts his Capstone from what he originally envisioned. Once per round per teammate, he can roll a Charm check (difficulty 10) when his teammates attack to shift their perspective and see a better way to hit. For every point he rolls over on his check, he gives his teammate +1 to their attack. He can do this in addition to his own action that round, but he cannot take Stress to do it more than once per teammate during a single round.

# GM GUIDE

## FIRST SESSION(S)

The first session is the first time you and your friends are finally sitting around the table to play. Nothing should have been planned or thought of prior, as this is a collaborative storytelling game, and everyone at the table should contribute to the story. When players are invested in worldbuilding, they will be invested in the game. Please keep in mind the safety measures you have taken beforehand when creating your world, as those tools will aid your group's vision. All that your players need are this book, a character sheet, and something to take notes. Heck, you don't even need dice until near the end of character creation, and you can all share a set if you need to!

Typically, the whole first session is a "Session Zero": safety, town design, and character creation. We covered safety in **"Player Safety,"** on page 3. Going over safety tools should always be the first activity of any session. Your safety conversation will lead to a better understanding of the tone and setting of the game itself and will ultimately help you to tell better stories. Having a consensus on tone will help lay the groundwork for the town design. Finally, players can build their characters and figure out what type of character they want to play in this story. Your first session that contains all three of these elements can last the length of a full game session. However, if these three elements are completed in a timely manner, then initial gameplay can start during your first meeting, giving you all a peek into the story you will tell together.

At the beginning of everyone's story, the Player Characters are still mundane: average kids living their average lives in their average town. Whatever age the players choose for their characters, they have their own life with their own troubles and victories. They are still a kid, living a kid life, making friends, causing mischief (or not, if you chose the Goody Goody Trope), and dealing with the grief of school. Breathe life into this portion of their story.

Let the players have their first few sessions to feel out their characters and deal with mundane life as they string together concepts and ideas of how the Inciting Incident occurs (see **"Inciting Incident"** on page 100 for more). Sprinkle bread crumbs of what the Inciting Incident could be through these first few sessions: Maybe there's news about the upcoming solar eclipse, or the students are excited about their field trip to the new nuclear plant, the "first of its kind" that will help bring jobs back into town. The focus, however, should be on these characters' day-to-day lives. Let them have mundane (but still important!) victories, losses, stress, and fun before things change.

This is also a good time to start sowing the seeds of later plot elements, even the supervillains. When thinking about how to best plan this part of the story, consider the following as possible questions to frame your thinking:

- What threads do you want to weave through the story to set up for later? Consider the Inciting Incident (see **"Inciting Incident"** on page 100).
- How can you set up the Inciting Incident naturally without the players predicting it? What red herrings or distractions can you throw in to make them think they know what will happen?
- How can you help them showcase that what they already know matters to their characters—and potentially figure out other things that matter to them?
- What could start to bring the group together, even before they're powered up? What connects them? What conflicts do they have?
- What elements of the town you've all created seem the most interesting for the story, the funniest, or both? How could the characters start to explore these aspects?

If you are running a shorter story arc, there won't be much chance to really show much of your characters' lives before this **Inciting Incident**, and you may have to do it either mid-way or at the end of the first play session. In a story of six long sessions or more, you have the space to pace out and define their home life. It's helpful to think of narrative games as either a film or television series. If the table wants a relatively quick session, think of the game as a superhero movie, where the audience is only given a short time to see who the main characters are before the Inciting Incident. However, if the table wants a longer story, consider the game playing out as a superhero TV show where the pilot episode is used to introduce the characters and give a hint of perils ahead, but doesn't hit its full stride until a couple of episodes into the first season.

Also, talk to your players! If they believe the pace is too slow, throw them into the Inciting Incident as the next scene. They should be aware as *players* that, unbeknownst to their characters, the life they know will change. The kids have to be in capes, after all. It's the title of the book!

## GETTING IDEAS FOR ADVENTURES

In *Kids in Capes*, the first session is all about the set-up of this world. As players discuss the town, the history of Supers (if any), their school, and the connections between their characters, it is vital to pay attention here, as it will help give direction to the story they want to tell. This system shines when GMs go into the first session without having prepped anything beforehand. Work together to blend all the elements the table wants into the story and determine the overall tone of the game you've all decided on.

Here are some questions to ask yourself (and take notes on) during the set up.

While we've yet to play a game where the GM's original plan survives more than a few sessions, it helps to have ideas of where you're headed... until the players' ideas, interests, and responses take you in different directions. Here are some suggestions to get you started thinking:

- **Are superheroes/villains established in your world?** What impact do these heroes and villains have on the town? Is there any previous history that lingers in the town from being in contact with a superhero or villain? Could there be any retired heroes or hiding-in-plain-sight villains that moved to your town?
- **A recent unsolved crime...** How has this crime affected the characters or this town? Is this crime a continuation, or a one-and-done situation? Do any of them know the victim(s)?
- **Notable local landmark...** Why is everyone so drawn to this location? Is the history of this place based on some sort of superhero's (or villain's) past?
- **Secretive group in our town...** What is this group hiding? Is this group here to help or harm the town?
- **Capes and Powers...** Once you know what these will be, how does this enhance or hamper the character's personality and personal arc (until this point, at least)? With their Cape, what is their role on the team? How do they feel about these powers? How dangerous are these powers to each other? To the town? As they start to learn and grow into their powers, what are some hardships that they are going to run into?
- **Strengths and Tropes...** What are the characters good at together based on their strengths and tropes? Individually? Based on what they chose for strengths, what are the players excited to play with as their characters? How can you, as the GM, support this? If you see similarities in multiple characters on what they may be good at, this can definitely assist in helping form the group at the start of the game, which allows them all to flourish together. When the characters have bonded and trust one another, this can be a great opportunity to highlight certain characters and their strengths, particularly those who have not yet had the chance or have not been as vocal. Everyone deserves a chance to show off their character's true self!
- **Relationship questions...** Positive and negative connections definitely help you understand the group's dynamic. The negative relationship questions can create tension between characters, leading to fantastic roleplay. What can you, as a GM, do to press further into these tense points? Or if the players have connections where they don't know the other, what is true (or false) about the rumors they know?

- **Family dynamics...** Now that the characters have these powers, how have their feelings changed towards their family? Do they need to keep their powers a secret and do everything they can to hide them? Do they share the secret with a sibling or a trusted family member, giving them someone they can rely on? And if superheroes are established into the story already, how does their family feel about superpowered people? Would this give them more of a reason to wear a mask and keep their secrets away from their family? Did a family member inadvertently cause these powers?
- **Extracurriculars...** The balancing act between school, home, and extracurricular activities just got knocked out of sync. Before their powers, how invested was this character in this extracurricular? Now that they have powers, does it affect their performance with this extracurricular? Do they avoid doing this extracurricular now? Who notices their change in performance/attendance?
- **Motivation, Obligation, and Weak Point...** Has their Motivation, Obligation, or Weak Point changed now that they have developed powers? If they did change, will these changes be noticed by those around them? What challenges can happen if they do change? If all of this remains the same, how does this Weak Point continue to hinder a now-powered character? How much *more* pressure is this Obligation? Can this Motivation lead them into trouble?

When you start to piece together these plot hooks and gain traction on the story, the story will begin writing itself! Try not to railroad your players along a single story or idea—which is too limiting and will not bear as much juicy narrative fruit. Offer different thoughts and vague hints that may lure players one way or another. That's the beauty of collaborative storytelling: the players will let you know what direction they want the story to go. With your players leading the path, you, as the GM, offer twists, story development, and tension in scenes. Working together, you will make one heck of a story.

When Chantal starts crafting her ideas for the adventure, she considers the responses her players gave her when creating the world and the town.

- Since heroes *are* established in the world, she'll need to decide whether to bring more experienced heroes into the game. If she does, she'll need to think about how to keep them from overpowering the novice heroes and saving the day on their own. Additionally, if something goes very wrong in the town that garners national attention, she'll need a good reason for those existing heroes not to show up. Smaller scale stakes, she thinks, will be good. Or perhaps larger stakes that seem small until the last moment, when the heroes have to act immediately rather than taking the time to call in a more experienced hero.

- In terms of how characters get their powers, Chantal thinks about the cicadas and how to weave that into the story. They've always seemed like weird alien creatures to her, especially because they die so quickly. Maybe the environment is hostile toward them, which is why they stay underground for so long? Maybe they target people who have the potential to gain powers?
- For the local hangout and famous landmarks, Chantal doesn't think there should be much more to the arcade than a greedy, mean owner, and she loves the idea that the narwhal is more a red herring than a real granter of wishes. But, if the characters explore it, she decides that they'll find that it's hollow and, thus, a perfect place for their secret HQ.
- The recent robberies are actually extraterrestrials stealing supplies for their machinery. While they're able to manufacture diamonds at home, they assumed any civilized planet would have ample resources to do that—and were frustrated when they came to Earth. She doesn't think stopping them from getting gems should be a key part of the storyline, but finding the supplies if they make it to their ship could be a fun moment for the players.
- Since the pharmaceutical company is so secretive, Chantal decides that they've discovered that cicadas can grant superpowers. The company is close to figuring out exactly how they do it, which they intend to weaponize and use to become a corporate superpower holding sway over global politics. Of course, the extraterrestrials will stop them long before that happens, but armed with the earthlings' research, the extraterrestrials will empower themselves more, making them an even greater threat.
- Chantal plans to use Grey Gates Preparatory Academy as the major red herring in the game if she wants to throw the players off the scent—and inject some social tension into the game. Given how closed-off the campus is, she figures the players might think there's something going on there. Lots of the rumors were focused on Grey Gates, so it's on their minds.
- The group, Chantal thinks, is balanced in terms of Capes (there's no overlap). Given that, she thinks that combat can play into all of their talents without having to emphasize any one approach too much. Their powers are diverse, and she thinks it could be fun to have Hermes lose control of his powers in a local art museum, possibly during a field trip.
- In terms of their Strengths, River took the Mechanic Strength and Audrey took the Technocrat Strength, so a pivotal moment for them could be cooperating to get some complex tech running, moving its gears and rewriting its software. Hermes seems to want to stick to the background and observe, so Chantal decides she'll make sure to

give him that chance. And, based on his backstory, Power, and Tough Strength, Udo really wants Chi to take some big hits for the team.

- In terms of the relationship questions, Chantal sees all sorts of connections she can use for comedy relief: the awkwardness between Hermes and Audrey, how Chi and River both fawn over Groove Rider for *very* different reasons, or like Audrey's odd attempts to act like a typical human. However, they also have some strong connections she can work with, seeing an especially clear opportunity in Chi and River, who have a deep connection and respect for each other. Even more, though, are the simmering tensions already within the group, like Hermes and River making Chi's life worse with the rumor. There's also Audrey and Chi being frustrated with each other, and Chi and Hermes having a potential romantic rivalry over Nikora. In fact, based on what they said about Nikora, there could be more to her than meets the eye, but Chantal will have to wait and see.
- In terms of their family dynamics, Chantal has lots of room to weave in Chi's family's tragedy to turn the screws on the players, and she plans to—though she wants to be careful about going too far and making the game too sad. Audrey's family, too, gives Chantal a lot to work with. A group of extraterrestrials living in town during a pending extraterrestrial invasion is too good to ignore! She thinks that she'll have them be completely separate from the species that the group will be pitted against, but if Audrey seems to be coming into conflict with her family, Chantal could pivot.
- In their extracurriculars, Chantal sees some ideas for bringing two characters together, but nothing that links all of them. Hermes and River could discover something during their work with the school paper, and something could happen while Hermes is tutoring Audrey in art. However, Chi seems more isolated from the other characters in terms of his extracurriculars, so Chantal will need to think of ways to integrate him that don't relate to the extracurriculars.
- Most of the characters had a Weak Point related to their families, so Chantal can tell they'll want tensions to arise there. The most interesting motivation to her, though, is Chi's, and she plans to make sure that she gives him numerous chances to be the team's protector to lead him down the path of forgiving himself.

# INCITING INCIDENT

Once the characters establish their relationships without their powers, they'll be ready for the first major event of the campaign: the **Inciting Incident**. This event will be where they gain their powers. It *could* also establish a mystery for the players to solve or introduce the antagonists for the campaign—but sometimes, it's just a plot device to get the characters their powers.

Throughout superhero media, there are countless ways that heroes have gained their powers, and ultimately, what you choose for your group will depend entirely on what's best for you and your players.

During the world creation questions at the start of Session Zero, you and the other players discussed how existing superheroes gained their powers—if heroes already exist in your world. Certainly, what you've agreed to should influence the Inciting Incident for the PCs, but you should still decide deliberately whether the PCs will gain their powers the same way as any existing heroes.

Beyond thinking about that, the other main thing to consider when making your decision is whether the players will get their powers together or individually. To help jumpstart your thinking about the Inciting Incident, we've put together a list of some possibilities for these events, separated out by ones that are well-suited for the group to gain their powers at the same time and ones that are well-suited for PCs to gain their powers individually. For each suggestion, we've offered some possible benefits and pitfalls if you choose that Inciting Incident.

## GAINING POWERS AS A GROUP

### *NATURAL OR MYSTICAL EVENT*

- **Examples:** a meteor passing overhead; magical lightning striking the group;
- **Benefits:** sudden; good for large groups; could either activate latent powers or give totally new ones; has the potential to give you many possibly powered NPCs to work with if the PCs aren't the only ones struck;
- **Pitfalls:** can feel poorly thought out or too sudden; may lack a larger purpose beyond giving PCs their powers;

### *ACCIDENT*

- **Examples:** exposure to chemicals or radiation in a science lab gone wrong or industrial accident; catastrophic injuries that activate latent powers;
- **Benefits:** similar to "Natural or mystical event;" could also give some PCs a sense of guilt to atone for if they caused the accident or an antagonist if an NPC caused the accident;
- **Pitfalls:** can feel poorly thought out or sudden; if PCs are making checks to stop the accident, they might roll well and prevent it; can feel forced, especially if they aren't able to roll to avoid whatever happens;

### *INTERVENTION FROM POWERFUL OUTSIDE FORCES*

- **Example:** a time traveler gives them powers to prevent a coming catastrophe; a mystical being imbues them with powers to fight the forces of evil; a government agency gives them a serum to make them super soldiers;
- **Benefits:** gives the PCs a sense of purpose and, potentially, a set of missions to complete; could clearly establish the stakes of the campaign and clearly situate the PCs in a larger world or universe;
- Pitfalls: can feel heavy-handed, especially if the players aren't interested in the kinds of missions the being or group suggests or commands; can feel like railroading by the GM;

### *TREMENDOUS STRESS*

- **Examples:** being in a losing fight; witnessing a terrible event; a superpowered NPC manipulating their epinephrine or cortisol levels;
- **Benefits:** the source of the stress is almost certainly an antagonist, which gives the PCs a common enemy even before they have their powers; can be an exciting cascading effect as PCs discover their powers;
- **Pitfalls:** only works with latent powers; takes some legwork for the GM to ensure that all characters feel enough stress to manifest their powers, especially if players want to roll Grit checks to keep calm;

Regardless of what Inciting Incident you use, some kinds of **Powers** or **Tropes** are harder to mesh with the group getting their powers at the same time. For some of those edge cases, here are a few suggestions:

- **Power: Companion -** If a PC's power comes from a creature with them, they're unlikely to have the same source of their powers as the group. It could be that they already had this companion but weren't aware of how special it was until the Inciting Incident empowered their bond. Alternatively, especially if the Inciting Incident seems harmful, their companion might "save" them from being exposed to whatever gives the other PCs their powers.
- **Power: Objects -** While most Inciting Incidents lead to powers being innate, those gained from an object are typically not inherent to the character.. As with the companion, an object that they already have might "save" them from the **Inciting Incident**. Or, the arrival of that object might expose the other PCs to something that gives them their powers. For example, if a magical hammer comes down in a bolt of lightning or an alien artifact appears with a massive wave of cosmic radiation, the other PCs could gain their powers from that secondary effect of the object's arrival, while one PC then wields the object.
- **Powers from training, including some kinds of Body Control and Stealth:** Because these are mundane powers rather than extraordinary ones, you can take similar approaches to having the character avoid exposure to whatever gives the other characters their powers. But since the abilities are innate to the character before the Inciting Incident, the player will need to make a check to "save" themself from it. If they roll poorly, they might be exposed. If this happens, you can have the Inciting Incident accelerate their growth rather than cause it—or you could just have any highly trained PCs not develop powers from the exposure that gives the rest of the group powers.
- **Trope: Escaped Experiment -** Often, these characters will already have their powers, so an Inciting Incident might not make sense for them. Assuming they are aware of their background, the Inciting Incident could make it impossible to hide their powers any longer. Seeing one of their friends thrown from a moving car, for example, might lead them to risk being tracked down by the lab they escaped from because they chose to use their powers to save their friend. Or, their instincts might kick in and cause them to involuntarily use their powers as a kind of knee-jerk reaction.
- **Trope: Former Sidekick -** This character has already done some superhero work given their **Trope**, but, like the Escaped Experiment, they could be in hiding. In addition, as a sidekick, they haven't come fully into their powers yet, so whatever the Inciting Incident is could give them more to work with—or restore the powers they lost when they became a *former* sidekick.

- **Trope: Not of This World -** Much like the Escaped Experiment, there's a good chance they're aware of their otherworldly origin but hiding it. However, the Inciting Incident might activate powers they aren't aware of, especially if their parents have hidden their true origin from the PC.

## GAINING POWERS INDIVIDUALLY

Most of the ways that the group could gain powers together can also work for the individual. There's no reason that there must be more than one person in the chemistry lab when the beaker explodes, and the mystical being from the future could visit just one of the PCs.

### MAKING A DEAL

- **Examples:** selling your soul to the devil for powers; promising a corporation you'll be their spokesperson in exchange for your powers;
- **Benefits:** the PC gets a complicated, thorny allegiance outside of the team; gives the GM a way to issue commands to the player that the whole team might not agree with;
- **Pitfalls:** commands to one player could create too much tension in the group; can feel heavy-handed;

### TRAINING / EDUCATION

- **Examples:** combat or weapons training; advanced understanding of technology based on research; arcane research into the mystic arts;
- **Benefits:** gives the GM a mentor figure as an NPC; often more realistic, especially in a low-power universe;
- **Pitfalls:** amount of training might feel unrealistic for a teen;

### SUDDEN MANIFESTATION

- **Examples:** an object you receive activating latent powers; a genetic mutation manifesting at a certain point in puberty;
- **Benefits:** suggests a family history of superpowers the GM could use;
- **Pitfalls:** can feel forced, especially if it just so happens to occur around the same time as others' powers manifest and there's no clear justification for the powers to manifest;

### SURPRISE ENCOUNTER

- **Examples:** receiving a powerful item from someone or finding it; chance encounter with an alien creature;
- **Benefits:** gives GM options for mystery; flexibility in terms of when it occurs;
- **Pitfalls:** can feel forced, especially if it happens to occur around the same time as others' powers manifest or if there isn't a strong reason for the encounter to happen;

## MAKING IT MAKE SENSE

Ultimately, what you and your players choose all depends on what works for your table. Some groups might want to have incredibly realistic, believable Inciting Incidents to propel the storytelling, and, of course, the stronger the story can be, the better. However, other tables might not care about the *why* as long as they can start *using* their powers. Even if that's the case, you'll want to use this as a strong moment in the story; regardless of what the players say, the more sense this makes, the more impact this defining moment will have on the players.

Remember, though, we're talking about teens gaining superpowers here, not something that can actually happen in the real world—so the degree of believability doesn't have to be high, just high enough. Even if we're used to people gaining the powers of an animal after they're bitten by it, there's no reason this is the only way to gain those powers. When the magical lightning strikes, they could be holding a cat and thus gain its powers. Or they could have a stray cat thrown into them when the wave of radiation hits. Or those powers could just be latent before it's activated by the superhero serum. Do what will work for the group.

## MAKING IT EXCITING

The most important thing is that, however you do it, the **Inciting Incident** should be *compelling*. This is the end of the prelude for your characters, and it should feel like exciting things are happening—because they are! To foster that feeling, here are some suggestions:

- If it's reasonable to have their powers manifest for the first time during combat, do that! Putting the PCs in danger and having their powers bail them out is incredibly thrilling. Sometimes, players might ask on their own if they can use their power at this time—but other players might need some prompting. If they miss a roll by 1 or 2, have them roll their Power Die and explain how that power suddenly manifests and bails them out. (Of course, whatever *gives* them their powers has to have already happened. They can't turn invisible before they fall into the vat of experimental paint that gives them their powers...)
- If the powers are going to manifest *out* of combat, encourage your players to give you chances to have them pop up. A character who can teleport could find their powers while trying to leap out of the way of something, but you won't have a chance to make that happen if they take no risks and just walk everywhere. Also, the more a character does things that *could* relate to their power, the clearer it is that they're ready for their powers to show up.

- Once the powers do manifest, ask the players sense-based questions, particularly feeling and sight:
  - "How does it feel against your skin when..."
  - "What does it look like as..."
- Taste, sound, and smell details can work, too, but they're much more dependent on the power that the character has. Controlling ice is unlikely to smell a certain way, but the inside of a robotic exoskeleton certainly might.

Chantal decides that it makes sense for the characters to get their powers separately. For Audrey, it makes sense that she already knows about her powers but is hiding them. River and Chi both have powers that could go unnoticed at first, but Hermes's powers would be a shock to him when they first manifest. So, she decides that they'll need to be in the same place when Hermes gets them—and that it will have to be dramatic enough that everyone else realizes they have powers at the moment.

From the Relationship Questions, she settles on them all having detention. Audrey and Hermes are already there for their prank, and River has the ongoing conflict with the bullies that could easily land them in after-school detention. And given Chi's respect for River, he might step in and get caught up in it—especially if his power manifests unexpectedly.

Also, in the Relationship Questions, they established that there's something up with Mr. Loux—so he's the natural person to be in charge of detention. And as a chemistry teacher who knows more than he should, he could be the one to catalyze Hermes's powers.

# CREATING VILLAINS

The key to making good supervillains is making their motivations believable and relatable. What we mean by that is that good supervillains should think they're the real heroes. As one writer put it best, everyone belives themselves to be the hero of their own story, especially the villains. Often, they will be very goal-oriented and able to rationalize any actions they need to take to achieve that goal.

## MOTIVATION AND GOALS

As such, creating a goal is a good way to establish a supervillain's motivations. Ideally, this goal should be a social ill that pretty much anyone would agree should be addressed, such as pollution, poverty, hunger, or climate change. Once the subject of the goal is chosen, the next step is

deciding the scope of the supervillain's goal. Are they trying to solve the problem of hunger at the local, country, or planetary level? The size of the goal will generally determine how far the villain is willing to go to achieve it. Larger scopes, such as planetary or galactic, require more extreme measures and allow for much more collateral damage.

While the heroes might agree with the villain's goals, both parties want to achieve them in decidedly different ways. The first way that supervillains differ from the heroes is that their method of solving the problem will be a solution that most people would consider irrational, impractical, or morally questionable. The second way the villains differ from the heroes or ordinary people in general is that anything they find unimportant or in the way of their objective is expendable if it moves them closer to their goal. In some cases, the supervillain may not even like or enjoy some of the things they do to achieve their goal, but they can and will rationalize *anything* as necessary and unfortunate collateral damage. For example, robbing a bank may be required to get the money to finance their deathray that will deter alien invaders.

## SUPERVILLAIN ARCHETYPES

There are two villain archetypes that have become classics in comic literature: the Opposite and the Dark Mirror.

The Opposite is a villain who is a foil of the hero in either powers, concept, or both. Superman conveniently has well known examples of each. Most of Superman's powers are based upon physical strength, so a foil for him would be someone with high intelligence who is purely human. Lex Luthor fits that mold perfectly. Or, on a conceptual level, Superman represents the idea of the perfect man, so an opposite of this would be the imperfect man: Bizarro, who is a highly flawed version of the Man of Steel.

The Dark Mirror is a villain who is an evil or anti-hero version of the characters. A classic recent example that everyone is likely familiar with is Venom from Spiderman. Both share many of the same powers, but they use them in dramatically different ways for decidedly different purposes. Similarly, Sabretooth is a Dark Mirror of Wolverine. Both have animalistic powers, both are close-range brawlers, and both have a healing factor that makes them nearly impossible to kill. Wolverine, though, usually fights for good, while Sabretooth usually fights for evil.

All of your villains do not need to be created using these two ideas. Sometimes, a villain is simply someone with a bad attitude and access to superpowers in some way. Never underestimate the power of greed, which is always a powerful motivator. Some might simply enjoy hurting people for the simple reason that they can and it makes them feel powerful. Feel free to let your imagination run wild with possibilities of what motivates your villains.

Alternatively, rather than starting with their goals or archetypes, a villain's powers could dictate their personality. A great example of this is Kilgrave

from the first season of *Jessica Jones*. Kilgrave acquired his ability early in life, and its unchecked use turned him into a completely self-centered monster who never really matured properly.

If you're looking for inspiration, there are plenty of resources online or villains from popular media that you can draw from and adapt. Regardless of how you create your villains, some will resonate with your players while others may fall flat and that's perfectly fine. Just go with the players' reactions. Maybe the perfect Dark Mirror villain that you put a lot of work into gets less of a reaction from your group than the throw-away villain, the Human Paperclip. Go with what works for your players!

## CREATING A TEAM OF SUPERVILLAINS

If you have a team of heroes, it may make sense for a team of villains to be up against them. If that's the case, you'll want to assemble a group of foes to face your players' characters. You can create each villain as described above, but you'll want to consider what makes these supervillains a team.

Many supervillain teams are united by a common long-term goal. Just as one villain can ruthlessly pursue an otherwise good goal, so too could a group of them. And, they'd likely be more successful. It may be useful, though, to think about how the villain's goals differ slightly—and whether all of them are really after the same thing or if one of them is manipulating the others for a different goal. To villains, the ends justify the means.

Other supervillain teams combine for a short-term goal that they couldn't accomplish on their own. They might not be strong enough to defeat a hero in a one-on-one fight, but in a five-on-one fight? This approach could be particularly useful for a game where there are existing superheroes. Perhaps a team of villains has captured a world-class hero and a team of scrappy teens who just got their powers is the one group they'd never see coming...

Making a number of individually tailored villains for your game can be a lot of work and, as a result, may require a lot of time. If time is not a luxury for your group or if you are just running a shorter campaign, creating a team of villains will be much easier.

There are several ways to do this. The first is to give the villains the same origin or source for their powers. Others include giving them a shared background story. Perhaps they are cellmates who successfully executed a prison break, or they are all research colleagues caught in the same lab accident. More simply, maybe they are all members of the same family.

Their link, whatever it may be, is a great connector. While we don't suggest having four villains who all control radiation in the same way, each could control a different element after an explosion in a lab. Or, they could have different skills that helped them escape from prison, later augmented

through mystical intervention; now, the con man can literally shapeshift and the mastermind can intuit people's actions two seconds ahead.

Chantal decides on extraterrestrials for the villains in her game and decides their motivation is the classic villain motivation: taking over the world. In this case, they're starting with the small dot on the map of Worchester, Michigan. But she wants to have an answer to why they want to conquer Earth other than, "Well, because they want to and can."

In order to sow some tension within the group about Audrey's family's motivations, Chantal decides that the enemies will have originally come to Earth in peace, possibly pretending to be a scientific exchange program. This would, she reasons, help them find out just how much Earthlings know about the way the universe works—and thus figure out if they're any kind of threat.

Chantal decides that the aliens ultimately want peace in the universe. Having seen what humans know and are capable of, they don't think humans could coexist with other species in the universe. The best approach, then, is to wipe humans out so that they can't threaten the peaceful order of the galaxy. The rest of the creatures on Earth can stay, though. They'll do better when the humans are gone, after all. She wonders, though, why the aliens wouldn't devote more attention to wiping out the Earth. Ultimately, she decides that the extraterrestrial powers-that-be aren't sending a larger force for three reasons. First, they aren't sure about the full powers of the existing supers in the world, so they worry about what might happen if they draw too much attention to the invasion. Second, the way humanity is going, they think there's a good chance that, even if they fail, humanity will wipe itself out within a few generations. And third, budgets are tight—even in space—so a smaller force means more funds to allocate elsewhere.

Chantal decides Audrey's family, then, is a different species that disagrees with this approach and has come to Earth to make sure humans aren't exterminated, though they haven't shared this with Audrey yet. They don't want her to accidentally tell anyone why they're on Earth and cause a panic. This is the approach that Chantal will start with, but if the players take it in a different direction, she can always pivot.

She then decides to make up some villains. To raise the tensions in the group about who Audrey is and why her family is there, Chantal decides that the main villain should have energy projection powers just like Audrey's—just slightly different. This villain will be the mastermind of the invasion who's laying the groundwork for the full invasion. They won't be particularly strong physically compared to the rest of their species. In a lot of ways, this will be a Dark Mirror to Audrey, even if she doesn't know it at first.

With an invading strike force, Chantal has a lot of room for different powers and approaches to the villains. But, since she knows Udo wants Chi to take some big hits, she's going to have them face off against a brutish

supervillain relatively early on, so they'll definitely square off against Chi's opposite: a villain who isn't about protecting anyone but just about hitting its enemies as hard as it possibly can.

She decides to think about the rest later when she sees how the group fights and what might be interesting to throw at them.

## SETTING UP THE ARC OF THE CAMPAIGN

Setting the stakes: the scope of the villains' schemes needs to reflect the stakes of what the players agreed they want to be defending

- A villain who wants to destroy all technology in the town to revert them back to a farming-and-barter based society isn't good for a group that said they want to save the world.
- A villain who's trying to detonate a nuclear bomb in the center of the earth to cause catastrophic volcanoes around the world isn't good for a group that just wants to defend their town.

The campaign should end the session *after* the characters get their **Capstones.**

Use this as a guide for how many sessions to expect based on how many **Growth Points** you give per session:

- If they're getting their Capstones as fast as possible:
  - 3 GP per session » 4 sessions
  - 2 GP per session » 6 sessions
  - 1 GP per session » 11 sessions
- If tthey want to fill their Power and Cape Trees entirely:
  - 3 GP per session » 6 sessions
  - 2 GP per session » 8 sessions
  - 1 GP per session » 16 sessions

As mentioned in the villain section, knowing your villain's (or villains') motivations and goals can help set the tone of the game. As such, this can help set up the arc of the campaign. If the players want to focus on a group trying to save the historic town hall from being bulldozed by a villain driven by corporate greed, their journey will most likely keep them close to home with a lot of pressure placed on their secret identity and personal connections. On the other hand, if they want to be thrown into a world full of superheroes in the middle of Chicago, they will likely face a much different journey depending on how public they want their heroic self to be.

Helping players choose the scope of the journey they want and matching a threat to this scope is an important part of telling any story when it comes to roleplaying games. In a game like this, the hero's origin is the heart of the fun, so the connection between the desired scope and threat should be as strong as possible.

By the time the characters gain their powers (as laid out in the **Inciting Incident** section on page 100), the main antagonist has likely affected the events of the world in some way. Now that they're powered, it's probably time for them to be made aware that machinations are being put into place. The next sections will give examples of what those arcs can look like and the types of scope an arc can have.

## VILLAIN-LED ARCS

In *Kids in Capes*, the villains are not the star of the show (even though they may think they are). However, in some narratives, we come across a villain with so much magnetism that the story looks like it is shifting around them. Be it a crime boss who becomes mayor of the city or a genius mastermind who has somehow kidnapped an entire state, sometimes villains make moves so big the heroes in the story have no choice but to act—even if they feel unprepared to do so. In these stories, it is important to remember that the players still have their agency. If the table wants to spend an extra session helping rebuild the community center that was just attacked by a group of henchpeople, they should get to. A way to balance this is when the group moves on from this scene, perhaps they see a news report that the villain struck another part of town while they were busy. The villain should never just sit on their hands, waiting for the heroes; maybe next time they meet, the villain has already completed a step of their ultimate plan off screen. Make use of the **Clocks** to help track these ongoing events (see **"Clocks"** on page 115).

*EXAMPLES OF VILLAIN-LED ARCS:*

- The villain is always pulling the strings. As the GM, use shorter **Clocks** to achieve goals, but make sure that your players don't get frustrated with always feeling behind.
- If the villain does lose, there is always a narrative step forward they still achieve. For example, if they end up in jail at the end of Session 4, the characters find out at the start of Session 5 that the villain actually intended to be there to make contact with a corrupt guard. Again, make sure that the players don't feel they lose their sense of agency.
- The villain is in a position of systemic power, be it wealth, political, or some other position that makes "going after them" seem nigh impossible. In these cases, make sure the players feel like taking them on *is* possible.
- The villain outright is more experienced, better equipped, and smarter than the heroes. Make sure that your players can see that their characters are gaining the skills and experience they need to confront the villain, eventually.

## ALWAYS ONE STEP AHEAD...

When running a villain-led arc, it is important to check in with your table that they are not feeling the burn from the bad guy always being a step ahead of them. Be sure to let meaningful wins happen. They are heroes learning the ropes, but it doesn't mean they cannot surprise the Villain every now and then. Besides, the Villain is smart and can make a new plan! The important thing to remember is to make it feasible that before the Villain completes their ultimate plan that the heroes *do* have a real shot to take the bad guy down once and for all.

A Villain always being one step ahead can mean lots of things. Mechanically, be sure to make use of the **Clocks** to track their progress. Narratively, below are some examples of how this can look. Remember to keep things fresh. If every time a villain loses they just say, "All according to plan!" it will become more comical than menacing, which may or may not be the goal depending on your table. However, it may also discourage players from doing anything, since they'll start to believe they're just helping the villain.

Examples:

- The villain has a plan to get put in jail to connect with a new string of henchpeople.
- The villain wanted the heroes to stop the bank robbery since it was all a distraction while another plan was in motion.
- The villain knows there is a secondary location with the chemical they need. Now that the heroes have stopped them once, they will not have their guard up for another heist later that night.

- The villain lied: that was not their strongest lieutenant henchperson. They've had a secret second-in-command this whole time, and now they know it is time to activate them.

## RELUCTANT HERO ARC

Not everyone is excited to be a hero. Even some people who think superpowers are cool before getting them may not embrace the great responsibility that comes with having them. These arcs are typically best used in a world where the idea of superheroes exists in some major cultural way, be it in media or everyday life. Unlike a Villain-Led Arc, a Reluctant Hero Arc will need an extra bit of player agreement because the *players* need to be excited to play a game where their *characters* aren't excited. If they are not interested in playing someone who does not embrace their powers and heroism, consider a Villain-Led or Traditional Growth Arc.

Examples of Reluctant Hero Stories:

- The established hero team is away for a bigger mission, so the city/town needs protectors.
- The established hero team has been defeated/captured/put out of commission, so new heroes must rise to thwart evil.
- The heroes are recruited by a superhero agency but continually fail to meet the goals set. Maybe they aren't cut out for it after all.
- Days and weeks keep repeating, and no one else seems to be aware besides the characters, who are less than equipped to do anything about it.

Also, unlike other arcs, there does not necessarily need to be one main villain pulling all the strings throughout the story. It could be a collective, it could be a few recurring villains, or it could be a larger group, such as a crime syndicate, that is causing the problems. The main driving force of a Reluctant Hero Arc is that the heroes do not feel like heroes, but circumstances keep forcing them to be. This differs from a story pivoting around moves the villain makes in that those characters might feel like heroes just down on their luck but, in a Reluctant Hero Arc, characters often suffer setbacks after great victories, always being put in a position to question their hero status.

### RELUCTANT CHARACTERS, NOT RELUCTANT PLAYERS

The defining feature of a Reluctant Hero Arc is that the characters often don't want to be heroes. Taken too far, this can result in players simply saying no to times when you're pushing them to act. While some refusal will be part of the game, you'll need to discuss with the players what they think *would* make their characters rise to the occasion.

Examples:

- Someone close to them is threatened or captured by the villain, forcing them to act.
- Along the same lines, someone close to them is harmed or killed, and they decide to seek revenge.
- The risk to the town becomes so great that if they don't act, everything in the town could be destroyed... including them.
- The characters realize they can personally benefit by becoming heroes, either by gaining fame, earning money, or having something good to write about on their college application.

Whatever it is, make sure you go into this kind of arc with full agreement from all players and agreeing with players on what will, eventually, make their characters act.

## TRADITIONAL GROWTH ARC

Sometimes, people do not want any fancy surprises. They just want a nice, normal pace with expected setbacks and victories. The story of a hero starting small and ending big, working their way up the chain of command to stop the threat.

In these cases, you'll be running a Traditional Growth Arc, one in which the characters start out with exciting new powers and end as a fully-formed, successful team of superheroes.

Examples of Traditional Growth Stories:

- The heroes start out stopping local robberies, only to find that the robbers are hired by a shell company of the mayor.
- The heroes find themselves recruited into a superhero agency after stopping a string of local crimes.
- A bank robbery quickly turns into the heroes fighting to save the city.
- A group of no-name thugs have gear more advanced than anything seen before, and the heroes must rise above their humble beginnings to find out what's really happening.

A Traditional Growth Arc can look a lot like a Reluctant Hero Arc, as the pace is a steady upward movement. However, this arc is different in that the heroes do not necessarily need to face a monumental setback right before their climax that challenges everything within them. There are setbacks, certainly, but they should not be as harsh as those in a Villain-Led Arc, and the victories should not be as big as those for reluctant heroes getting their footing. These arcs work great in settings with a healthy mix of big city and small town, where new heroes can be operating at a neighborhood level to stop crime, but supervillains might be operating at a city-wide level.

## GRADUALLY ESCALATING THREATS

In a Traditional Growth Arc, you'll want to make sure that the progression of the threats they're facing escalate both gradually and believably—but also significantly enough that the heroes feel that they're always growing in terms of what they can face. The mechanics will help with that, of course, with players unlocking more and more things on their characters' **Power and Tech Trees**. You also need to make sure that the narrative supports this.

If the characters' first fight is stopping a bank robbery, it's unbelievable that they can stop the most powerful supervillain in the world—one who the most powerful heroes in the world, even working together, were powerless to stop. Remember, *Kids in Capes* tells the story of their first adventures together and accelerates the stakes accordingly.

In addition, the escalating steps should be interconnected. If the team's first fight stops a villain from stealing radioactive waste, that same villain might bring stronger henchpeople to the next fight as they try to hijack a truck carrying radioactive fuel. Eventually, the villain might build their giant mech to destroy the town, and a worthy fight to show off their **Capstones** could be fighting that massive robotic exoskeleton—but five new teen heroes aren't going to square off with an army of eighty such threats at once.

Of course, the *threat* of such a fight can be a great motivator for creative thinking on the characters' part! There should be battles they can't win, forcing the heroes to figure out alternative ways to thwart an impossible-to-fight force. Maybe they trigger an EMP to disable all but the supervillain's mech. Maybe they introduce a bug into their code. Even though the threats escalate, keep in mind that the characters shouldn't be expected to win any fight they could get into, even with their **Capstones**.

Chantal decides that her game will be a Villain-Led Arc and involve a smarter, better-equipped enemy. The Villain knows their plan, and they are confident that some group of new heroes - who have no idea what they've stumbled into - will be powerless to stop them.

To level the playing field, she decides to give the heroes a mentor who knows more about what's going on. One of the teachers at the school makes the most sense, so she uses the chemistry teacher to this end.

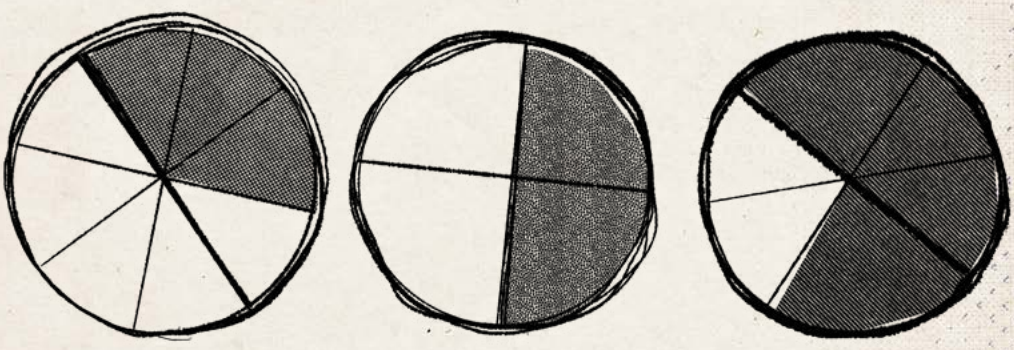
To escalate things gradually, she'll have the heroes face off against a small group of extraterrestrials who aren't expecting any resistance—much less, superpowered resistance. And it will all go down at a place that's convenient based on what the characters are doing at the time. (As seen in earlier examples in the book, this turns into the characters seeing figures breaking into the school while the heroes were hanging around talking about getting their powers.)

This approach gives Chantal plenty of reasons to throw the heroes into conflict with the extraterrestrials, and with an invading force against four teens, their enemies can have an almost endless pool of bad guys to throw at them. Plus, they have good reason to underestimate four teens, so they wouldn't be as likely to crush them right at the start and risk tipping their hand about the invasion. At least not until the heroes keep foiling their plans...

## CLOCKS

Created by John Harper for the wonderful *Blades in the Dark*, **Clocks** are a way to keep track of the progress toward some objective or event in a roleplaying game. In Harper's design, **Clocks** are segmented circles, and as steps to those objectives are completed, or as events approach, the GM fills in segments. When all segments are filled in, the objective is met or the event occurs.

In *Kids in Capes*, we suggest using **Clocks** to establish tension at the table, help players keep track of what's going on in combat, and to help you, the GM, keep track of bigger-picture events and objectives. Because these **Clocks** can serve different functions, we've split them into public and private **Clocks**.



### USING PUBLIC CLOCKS

Most of the **Clocks** you'll use in *Kids in Capes* will be public ones: Clocks that the players can see. Depending on the purpose of the Clock, you might want to use Harper's method of filling in a circle, but for shorter-term Clocks, we recommend using **Clock Dice**.

**Public Clock Dice** are dice put in the center of the table for all players to see in order to keep track of something everyone would know (or at least have a sense of). One of the most common ways we recommend using public **Clock Dice** is in combat. If, for example, 5 henchpeople are facing off against

the team, put a six-sided die on the table set to 5. As the PCs take out the henchpeople, turn the die to indicate how many are still standing. This can help both the GM and the players keep track of what can be a confusing element of combat.

The benefit of using a **Clock Die** instead of a traditional **Clock** is how easily the die's face can be set and adjusted, keeping the flow of combat moving. And, since the **Clock** will only be necessary during combat, you won't have to worry about remembering the value for long—or wasting paper.

On the other hand, traditional **Clocks** are better when the objective will take longer to fulfill, especially if you'll need to keep track of it over multiple sessions, making dice nearly impossible to use successfully. For example, if the local mining company is digging into the mountain that hides the team's secret base, a traditional **Clock** would be better for keeping track of how close they're getting to that base, as it isn't likely to be resolved in the same session that it's started.

Traditional **Clocks** are also good when you want their progress to feel more dramatic. After all, shading in a slice of a circle is more attention-grabbing than quickly flipping the face of a die.

## USING PRIVATE CLOCKS

Sometimes, though, you don't want your players to know how far along a **Clock** is—or perhaps even that there's a **Clock** at all. In these cases, it's best to use private **Clocks**.

In combat, for example, you might want to keep track of how many successes the PCs still need against a supervillain during combat without the players knowing the exact count. In that case, a private **Clock Die** would make sense. Or, if the villain is advancing toward their nefarious objectives behind the scenes over the course of a few sessions, a traditional **Clock** can work quite well—and if the PCs uncover their plot, you could always make that private **Clock** public.

Whether your players know about the **Clock** or not is entirely up to you as the GM. You can build tension by clearly filling in something without telling the players what it's related to, and that can simulate the PCs' intuiting that something important has just happened without knowing exactly what it is.

## DECIDING ON THE SIZE OF CLOCKS

Regardless of whether they're public or private, when you create a **Clock**, you'll need to decide how many segments there are. To determine that, consider two main factors:

- **How many steps need to happen for an objective to occur?** If the PCs need to destroy four generators to keep their nemesis from being able to power their mind-control device when the planned blackout occurs, the Clock will obviously have four segments.
  - However, you could always put more segments on a Clock than the PCs are aware of. Telling them that there are four generators and then putting out a public Clock with six segments could be a great moment at the table.
  - While that seems obvious, think about next steps beyond just gathering elements or destroying them. If the PCs must gather four different materials to construct the device they believe will reduce the supervillain's powers, that might seem like a four-segment Clock. But what about the actual construction of the device? Do they have to test it, too? It might be six segments, then.
- **How long do you want the objective to take?** If the PCs are fighting a supervillain, you might want the fight to go on for a while, so you'd set the number of successes quite a bit higher than if you want them to face off against an easy-to-defeat powered henchperson.

## OTHER SUGGESTIONS ABOUT CLOCKS

As you're thinking about the major plot for the main antagonist in your campaign, it might be tempting to use a **Clock** for this. We'd recommend against that, especially if the PCs can influence when or whether segments of the **Clock** get filled. Remember, when the team achieves their **Capstone Powers**, the following session will be the final one. Because of that, you don't want to be beholden to a **Clock** for when the narrative climax of that campaign happens.

Just because you initially imagined a **Clock** would have a certain number of segments doesn't mean it has to. If the PCs get more successes than you'd expect at the start of combat, feel free to make the villain take more successes to stop than you'd initially thought. Or, you could always have backup henchpeople arrive on the scene if they KO the first wave too quickly.

When a **Clock** fills, something should immediately happen narratively. Even if the PCs are filling a **Clock** to stop an adversary from doing something, after you fill in the last segment of a **Clock** or reduce a **Clock Die** to zero, something more should happen than the satisfaction of a job well done. Even if it's as simple as the villain cursing their intervention and fleeing, the

end of a **Clock** should feel dramatic. When in doubt, blow up something the villain needed!

The same is true when a **Clock** fills that the PCs were hoping wouldn't. Rather than telling them, "Well, you'll just have to wait and see," you should have the narrative take a sharp turn. Once the supervillain has all the pieces of the deathray and assembles it, why would they wait to use it? Again, when in doubt, make something explode.

# SUGGESTIONS FOR RUNNING COMBAT

As a GM, one of the hardest parts will likely be running combats that feel fresh and exciting. These can easily turn into asking for a number on a roll, telling them how many successes that is, and then asking the next person to roll. Especially as combats get longer, this can become even more difficult. To keep things exciting, we suggest the following.

## INSIST ON NARRATION

As a narrative-driven game, *Kids in Capes* thrives on the players describing their actions in detail rather than just saying, "I'll punch him." Part of why this is so important, in addition to making the story at the table more interesting, is so that you can help players figure out what Stat they're using in the fight. But mainly, the more descriptive the narration, the more exciting the fight will be. Having a player slide under a mechanical spider and punch through its shell to rip out the wiring underneath is much more interesting than letting them just say that they punched it somewhere.

The same is true when defending. Sometimes, players have a tough time knowing whether they're dodging the blow or taking the hit. Have them describe what they're doing, then confirm the Stat with them when calling for a roll: "Okay, so it sounds like you're going to use your combat training to parry the kick. If that sounds good, make a **Fight** check, difficulty 6."

## ENCOURAGE COOL THINGS & USING POWERS

In reality, it's much harder to execute a spinning hook kick to a bank robber's torso than it is to just punch them there. Since you set the difficulty based on how difficult a character's action might be, cooler things in combat seem like they should be harder; however, the mechanics of that discourage players from doing cool things.

To encourage creative combat, think about the difficulty you'd set for the easiest way to get the same mechanical effect. A character ducking behind an opponent and taking their knee out should be the same difficulty as just punching them if both will count as a success against the enemy.

Of course, there are limits to this. Diving out of the way of an arrow should be a lot easier than catching it midair—even though both result in the character avoiding damage. Use your best judgment, remembering to walk the fine line between letting the characters do cool things and making sure they actually fight like teens who are just learning to be heroes. If there's something that would be beyond their abilities, encourage them to take it as a **Cape Growth** or **Power Growth** and give it some mechanical spice! Catching an arrow in midair could be intimidating enough to an enemy that it counts as a success against them.

Another encouragement many players need is to use their powers in a fight. Mechanically, it's almost always to the characters' benefit to use their powers in combat. Remind them of this! They'll get to add another die to their roll, making it easier to hit the target difficulty. Feel free to ask them to do something to bring in their **Power Die**.

If players are really struggling to narrate well, you can always offer small bonuses for excellent narration, like:

- A bonus **AT**, regardless of whether they succeed or fail;
- A +1 to their roll;
- A reroll if they aren't happy with their first result;

Another option is to give additional mechanical benefits if they succeed—though you should use this sparingly for genuinely, surprisingly great moments. For example, if a particularly strong character wants to swing a henchperson into another one and describes it really well, let them take both out if they're successful.

And if the things you're doing to encourage players to narrate more wind up making combat easier, increase the fight's difficulty. It's more fun to get 2 Successes against an enemy who takes 6 Successes to defeat than it is to get just 1 Success against an enemy who takes 3 Successes to defeat.

## SET REASONABLE DIFFICULTIES

As the characters become more and more powerful, what they're doing in combat should get more and more challenging. As you play, see if the combats are lasting for as long as you want them to, and, if not, in the next fight, adjust the numbers accordingly: either make the checks harder or make it take more Successes to end the fight.

But where should you start? In a first combat, before the characters have their powers or as they're first manifesting, 6 is usually a good difficulty

for both attacking and defending, especially before characters have their powers or are just starting to use them. Characters with a **d20** in the skill they're using have a 75% chance of succeeding, and characters with a **d12** in that skill have just over a 50% chance of succeeding—which encourages new players to play to their strengths. Also, it encourages them to think of ways to bring in their **Power Die** to boost the odds they succeed.

After combat, you can always check with your players and ask them if they thought the combat was too easy or too difficult and adjust accordingly next time.

In addition to adjusting based on feeling, you should modify the difficulty of the check to adjust for anything beyond a simple success that the character tries to do. *Kids in Capes* doesn't have a formal way of inflicting "status effects," so these adjustments should be handled narratively, and, if they have a mechanical impact, they increase the difficulty of the check.

For example, if a character wants to tackle the supervillain to knock the freeze ray out of their hand, that would be considered doing something narrative with a mechanical impact. Or, if a character wants to pin an attacking alien spider so that their teammates can hit it more easily, that too would be considered doing something narrative with a mechanical impact. In short, if a character tries to do something that will make things mechanically easier on the heroes or harder on the villains, even temporarily, it falls into this category.

Below are some suggested adjustments to difficulties based on what characters want to do. The adjustments assume that the character doesn't have a **Cape** skill (see **Appendix I: Cape Skills** on page 147) that enables them to do it. If they do, go with the skill!

| Narrative/Mechanical Goal of Hero Action | Adjustment to Standard Difficult |
|---|---|
| One success (Taking down a single henchperson or a single success against a villain requiring multiple successes to defeat) | Standard difficulty |
| One success *and* do something narratively cool without a mechanical impact | Standard difficulty |
| No successes *but* do something narratively cool with a mechanical impact | Standard difficulty |
| One success *and* do something narratively cool with a mechanical impact | +6 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Two successes (Taking down a two henchpeople with one attack or two successes against a villain requiring multiple successes to defeat) | +6 |
| Two successes *and* do something narratively cool with a mechanical impact | +12 |

Remind players that when they make a check at a higher difficulty, it's all or nothing. If they choose to go for two Successes and impose a condition and miss the check by only 1, they get no Successes and don't impose the condition.

And of course, this table is just a guideline. Some things might have such a significant mechanical impact that the difficulty needs to be higher. For example, if there are 6 henchpeople and a character wants to knock them all down to prevent their attacks during the next Villain Action phase, the difficulty adjustment should be much higher than what's on the table.

## Saying No to the Players

Usually in *Kids On...* games, we tell you to always try to say yes to the players. If they want to do something, tell them the difficulty and let them roll for it if they still want to. For the most part, this is true in *Kids in Capes*, too.

But when it comes to their powers, that's not always the case. Players will want to use their powers in all kinds of creative, interesting ways, but sometimes, you'll have to say no to them. It's true that we're already in a world where superpowers exist, so we're throwing a lot of conventional physics, biology, and chemistry out the window. But, the thing to always remember is that *Kids in Capes* helps you tell the story of the group learning to be heroes. The amazing things that we're used to seeing heroes (who, in the comics, have usually been honing their powers for decades) do, well, it's just not going to happen for someone who got their powers a couple days ago.

Players may, for example, want to use their control over fire to cause small explosions over a mile away. That's a fun capstone, but won't be their first ability. Players might want to use their ability to shoot fire from their fingertips to create updrafts and fly, but that won't happen if they're only focused so far on learning how to throw fireballs in combat. Even though it can feel unfun, sometimes in *Kids in Capes*, you have to tell players no... or even better: "not yet."

## KEEP FIGHTS TO 3 OR 4 ROUNDS

Depending on the number of PCs at the table, combat should probably be 3 to 4 rounds. That ensures that all players have the chance to act a few times and have a success or two without the fight dragging on. Of course, if they're going for a number of successes, it's hard to know exactly how long it will take them to get there, but on average, players will get about one success per check each round.

By keeping things at 3 to 4 rounds, you'll have the combat last for about half an hour. As players get more comfortable with the mechanics of combat, rounds may move more quickly; however, as they gain more experience, their increased speed of combat will give the players a feeling of success as they're able to end their fights more quickly.

## END THINGS IF IT'S CLEARLY OVER

If the players don't seem to be enjoying the fight anymore, there's nothing wrong with ending it early. That's especially true if the outcome is already clear. If players drop all but two of their opponents in the first round of the fight, the few still standing might run away.

# All Summer Long
# A Kids in Capes Adventure
## by Austin Taylor

**Content Warnings:** *gaslighting, memory loss, adults not believing minors, oppression, groupthink*

The alarm goes off: it is July 24th, 2019 in a small forgotten community in Detroit, Michigan, far from the economic center and growth the city is experiencing thanks to Motor Man—the state's most popular superhero.

The sun is high in the sky, the dog days of summer are here, and the blacktop of the street is already letting off waves of heat early in the morning. The neighborhood starts to come to life slowly and surely, and all the players of the block take their places for another normal Wednesday in the city. Everything is the same as always, but days blend together all the time when you are off from school for the summer; no need to keep track of the time, or the days, or the week—just be in the moment and enjoy it all. Besides, an endless summer would be a blessing, right?

## Let's Look at Summer Forecast

This adventure explores themes of oppression and justice—and how, if at all, justice can be achieved for all. It explores these ideas through the idea of groupthink and how a community can shape a worldview, along with how a community can easily shift a worldview that it once held if presented with what seems to be better alternatives to their current status. If playing these themes does not sound fun to you, then consider a different adventure or use this module to inspire your own adventure with different themes!

### *Spoiler Warning, GM Only*

Ok, so, if you are reading this, you must be the GM (or a nosy player). Over the course of the adventure, the players will discover that they are in a time loop created by a superpowered person. This person might be a villain to some, but that does not necessarily have to be how the players see them. This person is seeking a world where they can operate however they want, even if it means trapping everyone in a loop forever. It will ultimately be up to the players to decide what saving the day means. Please keep all this in mind when running this adventure. ***Cycle is a difficulty 15 fight.***

# WHO'S IN THIS

## COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND POTENTIAL ALLIES

**Xavier Sumner (he/him):** Xavier Woods is the smartest kid in the neighborhood—so smart, in fact, he already has enough credits from his dual enrollment program to technically have an associate's degree before finishing high school next year. Everyone in the neighborhood trusts and loves Xavier. Recently, Xavier got an internship with scientist Dr. Nathan Essex at his lab that has just opened up at the university downtown, and has begun to work towards what he calls "my next big thing".

**Monroe Jones (she/they):** Monroe, or as many tend to call her, Ms. Jones, is the de facto spearhead of the block. She plans the block parties, she helps settle disputes between neighbors, and she is always finding ways to make the children of the community laugh and smile. They also happen to be a teacher at the high school, as well as the self-defense instructor at the community center. Some people joke that Ms. Jones can be in two places at once because of how busy they seem to be. They have been planning a big party for the summer that is meant to happen in about a week, and it is the only thing anyone seems to wanna talk about.

**KT (they/he):** Every community has That One Person–you know the one. They always seem to be where you least expect, they know a shocking amount of information about everyone, and they just have a general vibe of "do not cross them". Well, that is KT. He moved here two summers ago and is taking a gap year before college. While friendly enough to not be outright asked to leave functions, they certainly do give off the energy of someone who would have a little too much fun in a fight. As mentioned, this summer, KT is taking a gap year after graduating top of his class–And they have, so far, been using the time to build something they call "the computer of my dreams".

**Candace Kwan (she/her):** Candace is the golden child of the community home for the summer from university. She is a psychology student on a full ride that already has some graduate-level programs asking her to consider applying when she finishes her undergraduate coursework. Candace is the older stepsister of Xavier, and while Xavier seems more interested in applying his mind to the abstract, the mind of his sister is more focused on the concrete. Despite being a psychology student, Candace has expressed recently she plans to pursue a new career path, one she says is "much more hands-on".

## THE ORGS AND GROUPS

**Essential Inc.:** Essential Inc. is the corporation that houses the lab that Xavier works out of during the day. In the summer, he spends most of his time there. Essential Inc. is located downtown and is a friend to the community; they help fund community events and have been very open to having members of the community come work for them. Notably, during her summer vacation,

Candace has been spending time here as well–albeit no one is sure what exactly she has been focusing on. However Essential Inc. works in everything from cutting-edge science to standard business practices.

### THE OPPOSITION

**Cycle:** A new mysterious supervillain who has shown up recently. They leave a calling card at every crime they commit: a picture of a Möbius strip. They have mostly committed unrelated petty crimes, but some fear there is a connection being missed, and that soon, something big might happen.

**????:** Recently, strange reports have been coming in where people have described feeling like they missed an entire hour of their day. Due to the concern this caused, Motor Man gave a press conference that he personally, along with the help from the Heroes Union, would be investigating this occurrence. No culprit has been named, but they believe it is a new villain acting independently.

## HOW THIS CAN PLAY OUT

Before getting started in the adventure ensure the players have motivation by asking the following questions to the group:

- Which character has always wanted to become a superhero? This can be all of them, but it should at least be one of the characters.
- How long has the group been friends? This can be as recent as this past school year, or as long as their entire lives, but the group should be established friends when the adventure starts.
- Which character has always sort of hated Xavier?
- Which character has always sort of envied Candace?
- Who is most likely to be voted "Most Likely to Become a Villain?"

Another thing to note is that in this world, superpowers, superheroes, and supervillains are all mundane things people experience. There have been superpowers now for at least three generations, and the characters being high schoolers means they grew up in a world where superpowers were as normal as the internet. The only caveat is superheroes overwhelmingly tend to be those *already* with a great deal of power; there might be a few "rags to riches" heroes, but those are outliers.

The following are plot hooks for this adventure. *Kids in Capes* is a very narrative game, so these may happen in your session or might become irrelevant depending on what your players do. Do not try railroading these things into existence–Rather, look for organic moments that can arise as the players explore the world and try stopping evil.

## LOOP ONE

Everyone wakes up on July 24th, 2019 at home. Their mornings go fairly normally and they get to start their day however they usually would. Whoever heads outside first for the day to meet up with the group sees Xavier leaving for Essential Inc. in a cool blacked-out car they sent for him.

Things that occur this day:

- At some point in time, Candace asks the group to hangout or if she can join their hangout for the day;
- Candace shares that she is worried about Xaiver but is reluctant to share—more just that she has a **bad feeling** about "Dr. Nate," as Xaiver likes to call him;
- If no one suggests going to Essential Inc. to poke around then when the day is close to ending, Candace will ask the group "You wanna do something crazy?" and suggest going to the office after hours (she has a key card and can let the group in);
- **Someone** should see Xaiver in the office as well, heading into a room that looks out of a sci-fi movie, and Candace is shocked to see that her keycard works on the door. The day ends when the door closes shut behind the group.

## LOOP TWO

When the characters wake up next, it is again July 24th, 2019. As much as possible, try describing the day starting the exact same way. Any player who wants to realize this is happening can make a Brains roll with a difficulty of 10. Anyone who succeeds not only realizes the day is looping, but that it is not the first time it has looped. *It has been July 24th for at least four days.* Upon this realization, superpowers manifest in the character(s). Try weaving this moment in as organically as possible

Things that happen this loop:

- Anyone who failed their brains roll (but is told about the loop) can take an additional +2 to their Brains roll to realize the truth. No other community members besides the players can realize the loop is occurring–except for **KT**, who reveals they also have powers;
- If the players go along with Candace, their day goes mostly the same and will end the same;
- If the players follow someone else, they find that Ms. Monroe also finds her way to Essential Inc. for an off-the-books meeting, and the day ends as she gets out of her car;
- If the players follow Xavier to work, he is happy to let them tag along for the day but is too busy to talk with them much at all. The day ends when Xavier leaves the players in his lab after the office closes, and he says "I forgot something downstairs. Be back soon, then we can head home.";

## LOOP THREE

On the third loop, the players do not have the same July 24th morning, despite the rest of the community seemingly still being stuck in the same loop. They all wake up late and find a Möbius strip taped to their forehead with an address on the back of it.

Things that happen this loop:

- The address leads the characters to their school; the doors are all open and unlocked, and the building is seemingly empty except for one figure waiting in the Principal's Office: **Cycle**;
- Cycle refuses to identify themselves but admits to the players they have been the one causing the time loop; they are unsure how many loops have happened, but thinks at least 15, if not more;
- Cycle expresses that they will not stop until their plan is complete and things are more equal for all to become heroes;
- If the characters let Cycle finish their monologue about the unfairness of how heroes work in the world, they learn that heroes are not random–They are something cooked up by people Dr. Essex and other "Haves in a world with many Have Nots," as Cycle puts it;
- Cycle confesses they are the one who unlocked the power-potential inside the characters;
- If the characters launch into a battle, Cycle simply says, "No, you aren't ready for that. Go learn more," and the day ends;

## FINALE

The players will get to experience as many loops as they want after meeting Cycle, but at the end, they will be met with a simple choice: to join Cycle in trying to create a world where any one can be granted the potential to become a superpowered person, or to try defeating them in combat. Should the entire world be trapped for years, unaware of being trapped in a time bubble so that Cycle can potentially build a new 'normal,' or is this just another supervillain playing Creator? *Only the players can decide that...*

Here are a few questions to help consider how you could end this adventure and potentially use it to launch into a full campaign with *Kids in Capes:*

- What is different about the world after these events?
- If the players side with Cycle, how long does it take to create this new world order?
- If the players defeat Cycle, who are they under the mask? Why did they become Cycle?
- Who unlocked Cycle's power-potential, and why did they do it?

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Thanks to Drew Meyer for helping us explain the flexibility of Powers in the game and to reorganize that section for greater clarity.

Thanks to Keir Hansen for suggesting Obligations.

### *PLAYTESTERS*

Sean Beattie, Dave Beever, Ben Brown, Alison Cardinale, Tomas Gimenez Rioja, Josh Heake, Sen-Foong Lim, Jay Loomis, Diamond Lynn, Jessie MacDonald, Matthew McFadden, Drew Meyer, Meric Moir, Andy Munich, Sean Nittner, John Powell, Charles Rollins, John Sullivan, Rafe Telsch, Karen Twelves, Emilee Walsh, Basil Wright.

# APPENDIX A – SAFETY LIST

| LINE | VEIL | ASK FIRST | NOT FOR ME |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
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| | | | |

### ROMANCE OPTIONS

**Player:** _____ PCs: _____ NPCs: _____

Preferences: _____

**Player:** _____ PCs: _____ NPCs: _____

Preferences: _____

**Player:** _____ PCs: _____ NPCs: _____

Preferences: _____

**Player:** _____ PCs: _____ NPCs: _____

Preferences: _____

**Player:** _____ PCs: _____ NPCs: _____

Preferences: _____

**Player:** _____ PCs: _____ NPCs: _____

Preferences: _____

# APPENDIX B - SETTING

When does this campaign take place?

How serious or silly do you want the game to be?

How much violence do you want there to be in this game?

Will the stakes in your game be local?

Are superheroes/villains established in your world? *(there are more questions based off of this)*

How long have superpowered people existed? Which "ages" of heroes have existed?

What kinds of powers are present? Are all heroes powerful enough to avert global cataclysms? Or are they only "street-level" heroes?

How do people gain their powers? *(There could be more than one way—or it could be yet unknown!)*

How is the world different because of superpowers (technology, history, global politics, etc)?

Roughly how many sessions will your group play before you get your powers?

Our campaign takes place in... *(Name of town or city and its state or region— and it doesn't have to be a real place!)*

Economically, our town is... *(flourishing? floundering? growing? Etc.)*

A recent unsolved crime in our town is...

Our school's name and mascot are...

A notable local landmark is... *(repeat with 5 players)*

A local hangout for kids is... *(repeat with 5 players)*

A secretive group in our town is...

The person revered in our town is... *(repeat regardless of player count)*

The person scorned in our town is... *(repeat regardless of player count)*

What group (other town, sports team, etc.) will many from your town commonly butt heads with? *(repeat with 5 players)*

Rumours about the Town, other characters, etc

Other Notes:

# APPENDIX C - TROPES

## AMBITIOUS WANNABE

| D20 | D12 | D10 | D8 | D6 | D4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Flight | Grit | Charm | Fight | Brains | Brawn |

| POSSIBLE STRENGTHS | POSSIBLE FLAWS | QUESTION 1 | QUESTION 2 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Intuitive, Loyal, Protective, Skilled at..., Team Player, Unassuming | Boastful, Deceitful, Envious, Gullible, Insecure, Reckless, Weak-Willed | What would it mean to be one of the popular kids? | What would you sacrifice to be one of the cool kids? |

## CLASS CLOWN

| D20 | D12 | D10 | D8 | D6 | D4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Charm | Brawn | Flight | Grit | Fight | Brains |

| POSSIBLE STRENGTHS | POSSIBLE FLAWS | QUESTION 1 | QUESTION 2 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Easygoing, Gross, Protective, Skilled at..., Treasure Hunter, Trouble Maker | Blunt, Clumsy, Envious, Flippant, Insecure, Self-Centered, Rude | What do you do that always lightens your friends' moods? | Whose attention do you wish you really received? |

## CONSPIRACY THEORIST

| D20 | D12 | D10 | D8 | D6 | D4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brains | Fight | Grit | Flight | Brawn | Charm |

| POSSIBLE STRENGTHS | POSSIBLE FLAWS | QUESTION 1 | QUESTION 2 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Heroic, Intuitive, Mechanic, Prepared, Treasure Hunter, Unassuming | Blunt, Callous, Lazy, Paranoid, Patronizing, Reckless, Weak-Willed | What are you sure is happening in the town that no one else knows about? | How far will you go to have others believe in you? |

## ESCAPED EXPERIMENT

| D20 | D12 | D10 | D8 | D6 | D4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fight | Brawn | Flight | Brains | Grit | Charm |

| POSSIBLE STRENGTHS | POSSIBLE FLAWS | QUESTION 1 | QUESTION 2 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gross, Protective, Skilled At..., Tough, Treasure Hunter, Trouble Maker | Blunt, Callous, Impatient, Insecure, Paranoid, Reckless, Rude | What is one thing you miss about your life before this happened? | How do you find beauty in yourself as you are now? |

## FAMILY'S PROTECTOR

| D20 | D12 | D10 | D8 | D6 | D4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Grit | Brawn | Charm | Brains | Fight | Flight |

| POSSIBLE STRENGTHS | POSSIBLE FLAWS | QUESTION 1 | QUESTION 2 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Easygoing, Protective, Skilled at..., Team Player, Tough, Unassuming | Blunt, Callous, Envious, Deceitful, Demanding, Impatient, Paranoid | How has working to support your family improved you as a person? | What have you had to sacrifice to support your family? |

## FORMER SIDEKICK

| D20 | D12 | D10 | D8 | D6 | D4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fight | Brains | Brawn | Charm | Flight | Grit |

| POSSIBLE STRENGTHS | POSSIBLE FLAWS | QUESTION 1 | QUESTION 2 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cool Under Pressure, Heroic, Loyal, Mechanic, Skilled At..., Technocrat | Demanding, Dogmatic, Envious, Gullible, Impatient, Lazy, Self-Centered | Who taught you everything you know now? | What about being in the "sidekick" role frustrated you? |

## GOODY GOODY

| D20 | D12 | D10 | D8 | D6 | D4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Charm | Grit | Brains | Flight | Brawn | Fight |

| POSSIBLE STRENGTHS | POSSIBLE FLAWS | QUESTION 1 | QUESTION 2 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Loyal, Lucky, Prepared, Skilled at..., Team Player, Unassuming | Boastful, Clumsy, Demanding, Gullible, Impatient, Patronizing, Weak-Willed | Why does approval from adults mean so much to you? | Who did you recently hurt by seeking adults' approval? |

## HONORABLE SCOUT

| D20 | D12 | D10 | D8 | D6 | D4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brains | Brawn | Grit | Charm | Flight | Fight |

| POSSIBLE STRENGTHS | POSSIBLE FLAWS | QUESTION 1 | QUESTION 2 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cool Under Pressure, Intuitive, Mechanic, Prepared, Skilled at..., Treasure Hunter | Absent-Minded, Clumsy, Dogmatic, Gullible, Patronizing, Weak-Willed | Who first got you into Scouting (or more generally, the great outdoors)? | What do you have to give up to spend as much time in nature as you do? |

## HOTSHOT ATHLETE

| D20 | D12 | D10 | D8 | D6 | D4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brawn | Flight | Grit | Fight | Charm | Brains |

| POSSIBLE STRENGTHS | POSSIBLE FLAWS | QUESTION 1 | QUESTION 2 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gross, Heroic, Loyal, Protective, Skilled at..., Tough | Blunt, Boastful, Callous, Demanding, Gullible, Impatient, Self-Centered | Why do you get so much satisfaction from being excellent at your sport? | What have you sacrificed to be so good in this sport? |

## LAIDBACK SLACKER

| D20 | D12 | D10 | D8 | D6 | D4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brawn | Charm | Flight | Fight | Grit | Brains |

| POSSIBLE STRENGTHS | POSSIBLE FLAWS | QUESTION 1 | QUESTION 2 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cool Under Pressure, Easygoing, Skilled at..., Treasure Hunter, Trouble Maker, Unassuming, Wealthy | Absent-Minded, Clumsy, Deceitful, Flippant, Lazy, Rude, Weak-Willed | What do you think of all the try-hards around you? | What are you willing to go the extra mile for? |

## MISUNDERSTOOD PUNK

| D20 | D12 | D10 | D8 | D6 | D4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Grit | Fight | Brawn | Flight | Brains | Charm |

| POSSIBLE STRENGTHS | POSSIBLE FLAWS | QUESTION 1 | QUESTION 2 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gross, Intuitive, Skilled At..., Tough, Treasure Hunter, Trouble Maker | Boastful, Callous, Demanding, Flippant, Impatient, Lazy, Rude | Why are you so angry? | Who do you most want to listen to you? |

## NOT OF THIS WORLD

| D20 | D12 | D10 | D8 | D6 | D4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brawn | Brains | Charm | Fight | Grit | Flight |

| POSSIBLE STRENGTHS | POSSIBLE FLAWS | QUESTION 1 | QUESTION 2 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cool Under Pressure, Mechanic, Skilled At..., Technocrat, Team Player, Treasure Hunter | Absent-Minded, Clumsy, Gullible, Insecure, Paranoid, Reckless, Weak-Willed | What is one thing you miss from home? | What aspect of Earth life have you not quite been able to adjust to yet? |

## OVERSHADOWED RELATIVE

| D20 | D12 | D10 | D8 | D6 | D4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brains | Charm | Fight | Brawn | Flight | Grit |

| POSSIBLE STRENGTHS | POSSIBLE FLAWS | QUESTION 1 | QUESTION 2 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gross, Loyal, Lucky, Protective, Unassuming, Wealthy | Deceitful, Demanding, Envious, Flippant, Insecure, Paranoid, Rude | Who is that person who was always in the limelight? | What do you need to prove to yourself? |

## POPULAR KID

| D20 | D12 | D10 | D8 | D6 | D4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Charm | Flight | Brains | Grit | Brawn | Fight |

| POSSIBLE STRENGTHS | POSSIBLE FLAWS | QUESTION 1 | QUESTION 2 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cool Under Pressure, Intuitive, Lucky, Prepared, Skilled at..., Wealthy | Boastful, Deceitful, Flippant, Lazy, Paranoid, Self-Centered, Weak-Willed | Beyond people wanting to impress you and the social capital that brings, what do you like about being popular? | How do you treat the unpopular kids? |

## REDEMPTION SEEKER

| D20 | D12 | D10 | D8 | D6 | D4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Grit | Brains | Fight | Brawn | Charm | Flight |

| POSSIBLE STRENGTHS | POSSIBLE FLAWS | QUESTION 1 | QUESTION 2 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cool Under Pressure, Heroic, Loyal, Prepared, Tough, Unassuming | Blunt, Dogmatic, Paranoid, Patronizing, Reckless, Rude, Self-Centered | Why are you seeking redemption? | Whose respect are you trying to earn? |

## SCIENCE GEEK

| D20 | D12 | D10 | D8 | D6 | D4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brains | Flight | Grit | Charm | Fight | Brawn |

| POSSIBLE STRENGTHS | POSSIBLE FLAWS | QUESTION 1 | QUESTION 2 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gross, Intuitive, Mechanic, Prepared, Technocrat, Wealthy | Absent-Minded, Boastful, Clumsy, Dogmatic, Envious, Flippant, Gullible | Why do you get so much satisfaction from your academic excellence? | What have you sacrificed to be so good in school? |

## SHOW BOAT

| D20 | D12 | D10 | D8 | D6 | D4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Flight | Charm | Fight | Grit | Brains | Brawn |

| POSSIBLE STRENGTHS | POSSIBLE FLAWS | QUESTION 1 | QUESTION 2 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cool Under Pressure, Easygoing, Intuitive, Lucky, Skilled At..., Wealthy | Absent-Minded, Boastful, Demanding, Flippant, Patronizing, Reckless, Self-Centered | What skill do you love showing off? | Who are you actually trying to impress? |

## SILVER SPOON

| D20 | D12 | D10 | D8 | D6 | D4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Flight | Fight | Brains | Brawn | Charm | Grit |

| POSSIBLE STRENGTHS | POSSIBLE FLAWS | QUESTION 1 | QUESTION 2 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Intuitive, Lucky, Prepared, Treasure Hunter, Unassuming, Wealthy | Absent-Minded, Boastful, Impatient, Insecure, Lazy, Rude, Self-Centered | What advantages has your wealth given you? | How does your family exploit the town to make its money? |

| SOLE SURVIVOR | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| D20 | D12 | D10 | D8 | D6 | D4 |
| Grit | Flight | Fight | Brains | Brawn | Charm |
| POSSIBLE STRENGTHS | POSSIBLE FLAWS | | QUESTION 1 | QUESTION 2 | |
| Heroic, Mechanic, Skilled At..., Tough, Treasure Hunter | Blunt, Callous, Deceitful, Dogmatic, Impatient, Patronizing, Rude | | How did you become who you are now? | What is one trinket you always wear to give you strength? | |

| UNLIKELY ALLY | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| D20 | D12 | D10 | D8 | D6 | D4 |
| Fight | Grit | Brawn | Brains | Charm | Flight |
| POSSIBLE STRENGTHS | POSSIBLE FLAWS | | QUESTION 1 | QUESTION 2 | |
| Easygoing, Gross, Heroic, Skilled at..., Team Player, Tough | Callous, Clumsy, Dogmatic, Envious, Flippant, Insecure, Reckless | | What makes it so surprising that you're working with this group? | Despite your aloof exterior, what do you genuinely care about? | |

# APPENDIX D – STRENGTHS

**COOL UNDER PRESSURE:** May spend 1 Adversity Token to take half of your die's value instead of rolling on a Snap Decision.

**EASYGOING:** Gain 2 Adversity Tokens when you fail, instead of 1.

**GROSS:** You have some kind of gross bodily trick (loud, quiet, smelly... up to you) that you can do on command.

**HEROIC:** You do not need the GM's permission to spend Adversity Tokens to ignore fears.

**INTUITIVE:** May spend 1 Adversity Token to ask the GM about your surroundings, an NPC, or the like. The GM must answer honestly.

**LOYAL:** Each of the Adversity Tokens you spend to help your friends give them a +2 instead of a +1.

**LUCKY:** May spend 2 Adversity Tokens to reroll a stat check.

**MECHANIC:** Spend an Adversity Token to easily fix, break, or break into basic mechanical items without a roll. If the GM requires a roll for something more complex, add +3 to your check without spending any AT.

**PREPARED:** May spend 2 AT to happen to have a commonplace item with you (at the GM's discretion).

**PROTECTIVE:** Add +3 to rolls when defending one of your teammates.

**JUST HAVING FUN:** *(Free for children and available only to children)* Before determining the effects of Stress at the end of combat, reduce your Stress by 1.

**REBELLIOUS:** *(Free for teens and available only to teens)* When persuading or resisting persuasion from children, add +3 to rolls. When resisting persuasion from adults, add +3 to rolls.

**SKILLED AT...:** Choose a skill (GM's discretion). You are assumed to succeed when making even moderately difficult checks (9 or less) involving this skill. If the GM determines that you do need to roll for a more difficult check, add up to +3 to your roll.

**TEAM PLAYER:** Once per fight, spend an Adversity Token to support their teammates by giving them a +3 to any roll in a fight.

**TECHNOCRAT:** Spend an Adversity Token to easily fix, break, or break into basic technology items without a roll. If the GM requires a roll for something more complex, add +3 to your check without spending any AT.

***TOUGH:*** If you lose a roll when defending in combat, add +3 to the negative number. You still lose the roll no matter what, but could reduce your loss to -1.

***TREASURE HUNTER:*** May spend 1 Adversity Token to find a useful item in your surroundings.

***TROUBLE MAKER:*** Spend an Adversity Token to locate and receive help, within reason and without making any stat checks, from the "bad kids" of the town.

***UNASSUMING:*** May spend 2 Adversity tokens to not be seen, within reason *(GM's discretion)*.

***WEALTHY:*** May spend money as though you were in a higher age bracket. For example, a wealthy child is considered to have the disposable income of a typical teen, and a wealthy teen is considered to have the disposable income of a typical adult. A wealthy adult is considered to not have to worry too much about money- they would certainly be able to buy anything they need, and likely able to spend their way out of a lot of situations.

# APPENDIX E - FLAWS

Absent-Minded
Blunt
Boastful
Callous
Clumsy
Deceitful
Demanding
Dogmatic
Envious
Flippant
Gullible
Impatient
Insecure
Lazy
Paranoid
Patronizing
Reckless
Rude
Self-centered
Weak-willed

# Appendix F – Relationship Questions for a Character You Know (Positive)

**1.** Once, this character saw you at your worst. How did they help you to become a better person after that?

**2.** This character is keeping one of your deepest secrets for you. How has their commitment to keeping it impressed you?

**3.** This character was ready to go against their morals to help you. Why wouldn't you let them?

**4.** What are you sacrificing to protect this character, and why are you so willing to make that sacrifice?

**5.** What is your private nickname for this character, and why?

**6.** What part of this character's personality do you realize is exceptional that they do not?

**7.** What superhero or celebrity are you and this character both obsessed with?

**8.** What team or club are you both part of at school?

**9.** What tremendous act of bravery did you recently see this character do?

**10.** When did this character surprise you with how far they'd go to help you?

**11.** Why do you and this character both hold the same teacher at your school in such contempt?

**12.** Why do you and this character both love the same subject in school?

**13.** You and this character both have suspicions about one of the teachers at your school. What do you think they might be up to?

**14.** You and this character both recently witnessed an injustice in the town. What plan did you make together to right the wrong?

**15.** You and this character both want to be the same thing when you grow up. What is it?

**16.** You and this character both witnessed an important figure in local politics doing something shady, but not downright evil. Why has what you saw continued to concern you?

**17.** You often feel the need to stand up for this character. Why are you willing to go so far for them?

**18.** You recently had an incredibly vivid dream about this character. The next day, what made you think that, maybe, it's more of a premonition?

**19.** You're struggling with something at school, either academically or socially. How is this character trying to help you?

**20.** You've been in awe of this character since you met them. How did they make such a strong first impression?

# Appendix G – Relationship Questions for a Character You Know (Negative)

**1.** At a recent party, this character accidentally embarrassed you. Why do you suspect it may have been intentional?

**2.** During a recent field trip, this character got both of you in serious trouble. What would they have to do to make it up to you?

**3.** How does this character keep putting you both at risk? Why do you think they do that?

**4.** Since elementary school, you and this character have had a rivalry. How did it start?

**5.** There's a local politician who's rumored to be corrupt. How is this character connected to them?

**6.** This character often corrects you. Why do you think that is?

**7.** This character recently stood up to a bully. Why did they really stand up to them, and how did you find out?

**8.** What part of this character's personality scares you? What does that say about you?

**9.** What secret are you keeping from this character, and who would be devastated if they found out?

**10.** Why did you leave a sport or club you love because of this character?

**11.** Why does one of your teachers seem to love this character but hate you?

**12.** Why have you always hoped you'd grow closer to this character than you have?

**13.** You and this character both ran for a leadership position at your school. Who got it, and why is there still resentment about it?

**14.** You and this character played a game recently that went too far. What happened?

**15.** You hurt this character years ago. Why can't you apologize?

**16.** You recently did something that was morally ambiguous. How did this character cause it to become a bigger deal than you hoped it would be?

**17.** You recently discovered something strange in town and wanted to explore it, but this character stopped you. Why do you still resent them for that?

**18.** You started a rumor to try to help this character. How did it backfire?

**19.** You're struggling with something at school, academically or socially. How is this character unintentionally making it worse?

**20.** You're sure this character is hiding something from you. How do you feel knowing they're deceiving you?

# Appendix H – Relationship Questions for a Character You Don't Know

**1.** Based on what you know, how have you heard that this character is different from the rest of their family?

**2.** During class, you saw this character reading a comic book. Why does that make you want to get to know them?

**3.** In the past month, this character has come into your after-school job multiple times. Beyond frequenting the business, why do you think they're coming in so often?

**4.** Just over two decades ago, this character's family was involved in a very public scandal. What echoes of that scandal still reverberate in the town?

**5.** One of your friends told you they saw this character do something awful. Why don't you fully believe your friend?

**6.** Recently, stories have been floating around about something amazing this character did. In what ways do these stories conflict?

**7.** Recently, this character did something great for the town. Why was it so surprising?

**8.** Recently, this character has started hanging out at your favorite spot in town. Why do you think they've started doing that?

**9.** There's a rumor around the school about how this character keeps their grades up. Why are you seeking out more about this rumor?

**10.** This character has asked you for help in a class you're in together. Though you helped them, why did you hesitate?

**11.** What strange record does this character hold in the town?

**12.** What superhero or celebrity did you recently find out this character is obsessed with, and why does that make you want to get to know them?

**13.** Who does this character sit with at lunch, and why does that surprise you?

**14.** Why did you confront this relative stranger about the strange location you recently saw them leaving?

**15.** You and this character share a friend. What did they recently do for that mutual friend that impressed you?

**16.** You cracked a joke about a public figure recently. How did this character's response surprise you?

**17.** You know that this character is interested in getting to know you. How did you find that out?

**18.** You recently moved to this town under mysterious circumstances. How did this character find out about why you really moved here?

**19.** You think you saw this character picking on another student, but you can't be sure. What do you believe you saw?

**20.** You've been a member of a club or sports team for years. Why do you think this character just recently got involved with it?

## REMINDERS:

- ROLL A D20 AND ANSWER THAT QUESTION ABOUT THE CHARACTER YOU'RE ESTABLISHING A RELATIONSHIP WITH. IF THE QUESTION DOESN'T FIT WHAT YOU HAVE IN MIND FOR THAT RELATIONSHIP, FEEL FREE TO REROLL OR CHOOSE ANOTHER QUESTION.

- IF YOU ROLL A QUESTION THAT HAS ALREADY BEEN ANSWERED, CHOOSE THE QUESTION ABOVE OR BELOW OR REROLL.

- ONCE YOU'VE ANSWERED, REMEMBER TO CROSS OUT THE QUESTION SO THAT YOU DON'T ANSWER THAT QUESTION ABOUT ANOTHER CHARACTER-- AND SO THAT OTHER PLAYERS DON'T ANSWER THE SAME QUESTION.

# APPENDIX I - CAPE SKILLS

## BRAWLER

### STICK AND MOVE

*Constant*

+X bonus to your defense rolls in close combat.

| STARTING | INTERMEDIATE | ADVANCED |
|---|---|---|
| +2 | +4 | +6 |

### GRAPPLE

*Action*

Instead of hitting opponent, you may grapple them.

| STARTING | INTERMEDIATE | ADVANCED |
|---|---|---|
| Keeps them from moving; they can still attack. | Prevents them from attacking. | Gives teammates +3 on attacks against them. |

### COMBO STRIKE

*Action*

Take 1 Stress to attack X additional times.

| STARTING | INTERMEDIATE | ADVANCED |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 |

### STRIKE BACK

*Reaction*

When hit, you may counterattack.

| STARTING | INTERMEDIATE | ADVANCED |
|---|---|---|
| Only when you take Stress from an attack. | Take 1 Stress to activate even if you defend successfully. | Activate when attacked without taking Stress. |

### KNOCKOUT BLOW

*Constant*

On high enough attack rolls, you immediately knock out an opponent (if narratively appropriate).

| STARTING | INTERMEDIATE | ADVANCED |
|---|---|---|
| +10 or higher. | +8 or higher. | +5 or higher. |

### SPOT WEAKNESS

*Constant*

Once per combat per enemy, you may make a Brains check to spot that enemy's weakness, difficulty 10. If successful, +X bonus to attack rolls against that enemy for the rest of combat.

| STARTING | INTERMEDIATE | ADVANCED |
|---|---|---|
| 3 | 5 | 7 |

## CRYPTIC

### DEFLECT

*Reaction*

Take less stress when attacked.

| STARTING | INTERMEDIATE | ADVANCED |
|---|---|---|
| Not available. | Reduce all attacks against you by 1 Stress. | ...and once per round, ignore all Stress from an attack against you. |

### EVADE

*Constant*

You get limited invisibility. +X bonus to all defense rolls.

| STARTING | INTERMEDIATE | ADVANCED |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 |

### ILLUSION

*Action*

You create an illusion. When an enemy tries to attack you, you make a Charm or Flight check at the indicated difficulty. On a success, your enemy targets the illusion, automatically hitting it and dispelling it.

| STARTING | INTERMEDIATE | ADVANCED |
|---|---|---|
| 12 | 9 | 6 |

### STUN

*Action*

Before a henchperson acts, you make a Brawn, Charm, or Flight check at the indicated difficulty. If successful, they cannot act during the Villain Action.

| STARTING | INTERMEDIATE | ADVANCED |
|---|---|---|
| 12 | 9 | 6 |

### SHIELD

*Reaction (Limited)*

Prevent all teammates from taking 1 Stress at the end of the turn.

| STARTING | INTERMEDIATE | ADVANCED |
|---|---|---|
| Once per combat. | Twice per combat. | Prevent all teammates from taking 1 Stress at the end of the Hero Actions |

### DIMENSIONAL STEP

*Reaction*

Teleport a short distance. You cannot use this to avoid being hit in combat.

| STARTING | INTERMEDIATE | ADVANCED |
|---|---|---|
| 5 feet. | 10 feet. | 20 feet. |

# GUARDIAN

### AID

*Reaction*

After a teammate attempts to attack or defend, you may add a bonus to their roll.

| STARTING | INTERMEDIATE | ADVANCED |
|---|---|---|
| +2 | Roll Power Die and use result. | Roll Power Die twice and use either result. |

### FORCE FIELD

*Constant*

+X bonus to another character's defense rolls in combat.

| STARTING | INTERMEDIATE | ADVANCED |
|---|---|---|
| 2 | 4 | 6 |

### DEFEND

*Reaction*

Help defend teammates. You roll an appropriate defense check when they do at the same difficulty.

| STARTING | INTERMEDIATE | ADVANCED |
|---|---|---|
| If you are successful, add the amount you are over your check to theirs. If you fail, take 1 Stress. | If you are successful, add the amount +2 you are over your check to theirs. | If you are successful, add the amount +5 you are over your check to theirs. |

### FAST THINKING

*Constant*

Allow yourself or another player to make a Snap Decision as a Planned Action. You may only do this as many times as indicated in the level of this ability.

| STARTING | INTERMEDIATE | ADVANCED |
|---|---|---|
| Once per combat. | Three times per combat. | Once per round. |

### REASSURE

*Action*

Once per combat, decrease the Stress of all teammates by X.

| STARTING | INTERMEDIATE | ADVANCED |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 4 |

### SHIELD

*Reaction (Limited)*

Prevent all teammates from taking 1 Stress at the end of the turn.

| STARTING | INTERMEDIATE | ADVANCED |
|---|---|---|
| Once per combat. | Twice per combat. | Prevent all teammates from taking 1 Stress at the end of Hero Actions. |

## SHOOTER

### BURST SHOT

*Action*

Hit all combatants in an area.

| STARTING | INTERMEDIATE | ADVANCED |
|---|---|---|
| 1 Success against all enemies in area. 3 Stress to all teammates in area. | 1 Success against all enemies in area. 1 Stress to all teammates in area. | 1 Success against all enemies in area. |

### COMBO STRIKE

*Action*

Take 1 Stress to make X additional attacks.

| STARTING | INTERMEDIATE | ADVANCED |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 |

### BLAST

*Action*

Damage something in the environment, causing a mechanical impact that applies to a number of enemies until the end of the next Villains' Actions.

| STARTING | INTERMEDIATE | ADVANCED |
|---|---|---|
| Applies to up to 3 enemies. | Applies to up to 6 enemies. | Applies to all enemies. |

### INDIRECT

*Action*

Make an attack against a foe in range that you can't see. The attack passes through walls, or other solid objects without damaging them. You have to know that the foe is there.

| STARTING | INTERMEDIATE | ADVANCED |
|---|---|---|
| Difficulty for the attack is Standard Difficulty +6. | Difficulty for the attack is Standard Difficulty +3. | Difficulty for the attack is Standard Difficulty. |

### SUPPRESSING FIRE

*Action*

Make an attack against a henchperson. If successful, remove that henchperson from combat and...

| STARTING | INTERMEDIATE | ADVANCED |
|---|---|---|
| ...prevent 1 other henchperson from attacking during the next Villain Actions. | ...prevent 3 other henchpeople from attacking during the next Villain Actions. | ...prevent all henchpeople from attacking during the next Villain Actions. |

### TAKE COVER

*Constant*

After attacking, if cover is available...

| STARTING | INTERMEDIATE | ADVANCED |
|---|---|---|
| ...+3 to your defense rolls during the Villain Actions. | ...+5 to your defense rolls during the Villain Actions. | ...+5 to your defense rolls during the Villain action and counterattack for free, even if you are not the target. |

# TACTICIAN

### AID

*Reaction*

After a teammate attempts to attack or defend, you may add a bonus to their roll.

| STARTING | INTERMEDIATE | ADVANCED |
|---|---|---|
| +2 | Roll Power Die and use result. | Roll Power Die twice and use either result. |

### FAST THINKING

*Reaction*

Allow yourself or another player to make a Snap Decision as a Planned Action. You may only do this as many times as indicated in the level of this ability.

| STARTING | INTERMEDIATE | ADVANCED |
|---|---|---|
| Once per combat. | Three times per combat. | Once per round. |

### REASSURE

*Action*

Once per combat, decrease the Stress of all teammates by X.

| STARTING | INTERMEDIATE | ADVANCED |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 4 |

### SPOT WEAKNESS

*Constant*

Once per combat per enemy, you may make a Brains check to spot that enemy's weakness, difficulty 10. If successful, +X bonus to attack rolls against enemy for the rest of combat.

| STARTING | INTERMEDIATE | ADVANCED |
|---|---|---|
| 3 | 5 | 7 |

### STICK AND MOVE

*Constant*

+X bonus to your defense rolls in close combat.

| STARTING | INTERMEDIATE | ADVANCED |
|---|---|---|
| 2 | 4 | 6 |

### TEACH

*Constant*

Transfer AT to a teammate.

| STARTING | INTERMEDIATE | ADVANCED |
|---|---|---|
| Spend 1 AT to give 1 AT to a teammate. | Spend up to 5 AT to give that many AT to a teammate. | Spend up to 4 AT to give twice that many AT to that teammate. |

## TANK

### AGGRO FOE

*Reaction*

Instead of hitting your opponent, redirect an attack to you.

| STARTING | INTERMEDIATE | ADVANCED |
|---|---|---|
| Make defense check at -3. If unsuccessful, you both suffer penalty as normal. | Make defense check. If unsuccessful, you suffer penalty as normal, but original target takes only 1 Stress. | Make defense check at +5. Original target takes no Stress, even if you are unsuccessful. |

### DEFEND

*Reaction*

Help defend teammates. You roll appropriate defense check when they do at the same difficulty.

| STARTING | INTERMEDIATE | ADVANCED |
|---|---|---|
| If you are successful, add the amount you are over your check to theirs. If you fail, take 1 Stress. | If you are successful, add the amount +2 you are over your check to theirs. | If you are successful, add the amount +5 you are over your check to theirs. |

### GRAPPLE

*Action*

Instead of hitting opponent, you may grapple them.

| STARTING | INTERMEDIATE | ADVANCED |
|---|---|---|
| Keeps them from moving; they can still attack. | Prevents them from attacking. | Gives teammates +3 on attacks against them. |

### HEAVY HITTER

*Constant*

+X bonus to your attack rolls in close combat.

| STARTING | INTERMEDIATE | ADVANCED |
|---|---|---|
| 2 | 4 | 6 |

### DEFLECT

*Reaction*

Take less stress when attacked.

| STARTING | INTERMEDIATE | ADVANCED |
|---|---|---|
| Not available. | Reduce all attacks against you by 1 Stress. | ...and once per round, ignore all Stress from an attack against you. |

### SHELTER TEAMMATE

*Reaction*

At the start of Villain Actions each round, pick one teammate. During this round of Villain Actions. You make defense checks any time that teammate would.

| STARTING | INTERMEDIATE | ADVANCED |
|---|---|---|
| If either of you is successful, you take any Stress they would have. They take no Stress.<br><br>If both of you are unsuccessful, you both take Stress based on your rolls. | If both of you are successful, you take the Stress from the better result. They take no Stress.<br><br>Otherwise, you take any Stress they would have. They take no Stress. | If only one of you is successful, you take 1 Stress. They take no Stress.<br><br>If both of you are successful, neither of you takes Stress. |

# KIDS IN CAPES

NAME: _____ PRONOUNS: _____

AGE: _____ TROPE: _____

CAPE & POWER: _____

STRENGTHS: _____

_____

FLAWS: _____

_____

MOTIVATION: _____

_____

OBLIGATIONS: _____

_____

TROPE QUESTIONS: _____

_____

_____

_____

WEAK POINTS: _____

_____

## STATS

| | |
|---|---|
| _____ FIGHT | _____ FLIGHT |
| _____ BRAINS | _____ BRAWN |
| _____ CHARM | _____ GRIT |

## ADVERSITY TOKENS

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

STRESS: _____

_____ STRESS-BOOSTED STAT

_____ STRESS-REDUCED STAT

_____ CAPE STAT

## UTILITY BELT

## DESCRIPTION

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

KIDS IN CAPES

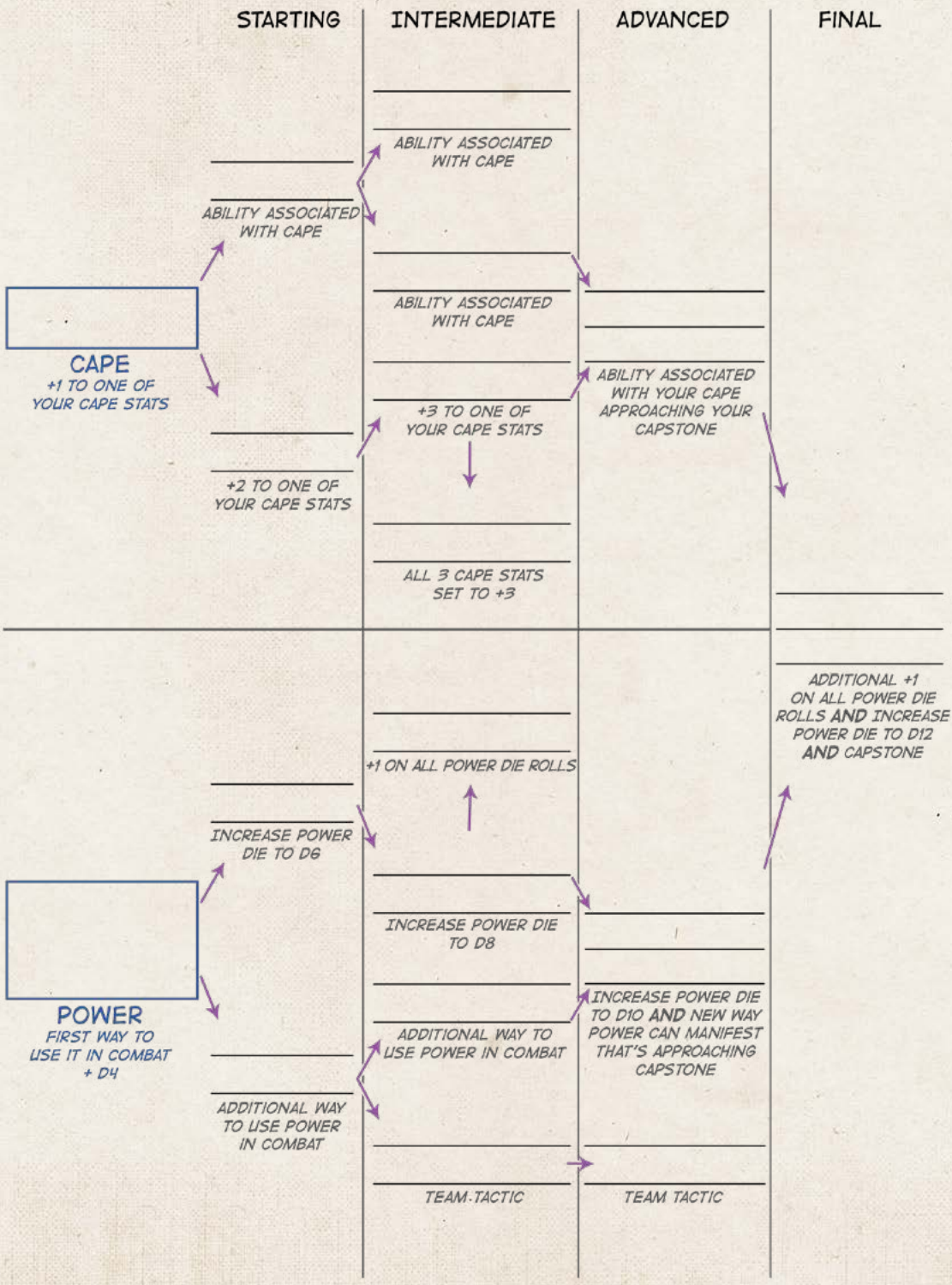
## POWERS

## RELATIONSHIP QUESTIONS

## EXTRACURRICULARS

## EXTRAS & NOTES

# KIDS IN CAPES


STARTING
INTERMEDIATE
ADVANCED
FINAL
ABILITY ASSOCIATED WITH CAPE
ABILITY ASSOCIATED WITH CAPE
ABILITY ASSOCIATED WITH CAPE
CAPE
+1 TO ONE OF YOUR CAPE STATS
+3 TO ONE OF YOUR CAPE STATS
ABILITY ASSOCIATED WITH YOUR CAPE APPROACHING YOUR CAPSTONE
+2 TO ONE OF YOUR CAPE STATS
ALL 3 CAPE STATS SET TO +3
ADDITIONAL +1 ON ALL POWER DIE ROLLS AND INCREASE POWER DIE TO D12 AND CAPSTONE
+1 ON ALL POWER DIE ROLLS
INCREASE POWER DIE TO D6
INCREASE POWER DIE TO D8
INCREASE POWER DIE TO D10 AND NEW WAY POWER CAN MANIFEST THAT'S APPROACHING CAPSTONE
POWER
FIRST WAY TO USE IT IN COMBAT + D4
ADDITIONAL WAY TO USE POWER IN COMBAT
ADDITIONAL WAY TO USE POWER IN COMBAT
TEAM TACTIC
TEAM TACTIC